

## The Figure of the Nymph in Early Modern Culture

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# The Figure of the Nymph in Early Modern Culture

*Edited by*

Karl A.E. Enenkel  
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## Acknowledgements

Nymphs have accompanied us for quite some time. Ever since developing the idea of moving Warburg's 'bewegtes Beiwerk' to centre stage and dedicating a volume to the ubiquitous, yet eternally overlooked nymphs, we have explored the topic at a series of workshops and in various research contexts. The field was first charted in a series of panels at the Renaissance Society of America Annual Meeting in Berlin in 2015. This was followed by the workshop "Nymphs in Early Modern Culture" held at the University of Münster in early 2016, which brought together panellists from the RSA meeting as well as a group of additional scholars. This workshop was financed by the *Cluster of Excellence "Religion und Politik"* of the University of Münster and by the *Seminar für Lateinische Philologie des Mittelalters und der Neuzeit*. At Freie Universität Berlin, the development of the volume has been closely linked to a project headed by Anita Traninger on the Spanish Golden Age novel, supported by the *German Research Foundation (DFG)* in the framework of the research group "Discursivizations of the New". At the University of Münster, it is part of the project in the *Cluster of Excellence* entitled "Die neulateinische Emblematik. Die multimediale Gattung der neulateinischen (und mehrsprachigen) Emblematik als Vermittlerin politischen und religiösen Denkens, ca. 1530–ca. 1670", directed by Karl Enenkel.

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Berlin – Münster, 3 October 2017

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Among her book publications are *Müheleose Wissenschaft. Rhetorik und Lullismus in den deutschsprachigen Ländern der Frühen Neuzeit* (2001), *Macht Wissen Wahrheit*, ed. with K.W. Hempfer (2005), *Dynamiken des Wissens*, ed. with K.W. Hempfer (2007), *Fiktionen des Faktischen in der Renaissance*, ed. with U. Schneider (2010). Her most recent book publications are on practices of conflict and genres of debate shared by and jointly shaped by scholasticism and humanism (*Disputation, Deklamation, Dialog. Medien und Gattungen europäischer Wissensverhandlungen zwischen Scholastik und Humanismus*, 2012), on *The Emergence of Impartiality* (ed. with K. Murphy, 2014), and on *Discourses of Anger in the Early Modern Period* (ed. with Karl A.E. Enenkel, 2015).

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*Europa: Kulturtransfer am frühneuzeitlichen Hof* (2012); (ed. with C. Kampmann et al.) *Neue Modelle im Alten Europa: Traditionsbruch und Innovation als Herausforderung in der Frühen Neuzeit* (2012); (ed. with Sigrid Ruby), *Das Porträt als kulturelle Praxis* (2016); and (ed. with K. Deutsch and C. Echinger-Maurach) *Baden im Schloss – Gestalt und Funktion höfischer Bäder in der Frühen Neuzeit* (2017).

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# Introduction: The Figure of the Nymph in Early Modern Culture

Anita Traninger and Karl A.E. Enenkel

The nymph as a cultural sign has vanished. Having been a ubiquitous fixture in literature and art since antiquity, and culminating as a spur to the imagination and a transmitter of allegorical meanings in the early modern period, she departed sometime in the nineteenth century. But echoes remain. Indeed, the nymph continues to figure in the cultural imagination, manifesting in forms as diverse as the alluring temptresses in nineteenth-century depictions of the temptation of Saint Anthony to Nabokov's *Lolita* and Lars von Trier's *Nymphomaniac*. Even Beyoncé, with her hair eternally wafting in the breeze of a nearby stage fan, is reminiscent of a Renaissance nymph. And yet, despite these references, both explicit and implicit, the nymphs' significance as a cultural sign has largely been lost. Whereas previously the nymph had been an important marker in the mental landscape, making multifaceted and frequent appearances in both literature and the visual arts, taking on a signifying function in various intellectual, moral, religious, and artistic discourses, and exercising her powers to stimulate the imagination (not least as emblems of erotic fantasy), the modern-day nymph has been relegated to the margins of the symbolic world. The objective of this volume is to bring her back into the frame, to recover and explore the former uses, functions, and semantics associated with the nymphs of the early modern age.

If we take the present state of research as a point of departure, it is far from clear what the *signifié* of “nymph” actually encompassed in the Renaissance.<sup>1</sup> Modern perceptions are still deeply informed by Aby Warburg's reflections on the Renaissance nymph, which have proven enormously influential. Yet Warburg's focus was on features that were very far from what scholars or artists

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1 Important aspects are highlighted in Kramer A., art. “Nymphs”, in *Brill's New Pauly Supplements* 1. vol. 4: *The Reception of Myth and Mythology*, ed. Maria Moog-Grünewald (Leiden: 2010) 433–443.

of the early modern period would have associated with a nymph.<sup>2</sup> Warburg's views emerged out of an imagined exchange of letters he had with André Jolles, the Dutch critic and literary historian, in 1900. Expressing his fascination with a minor character in one of Ghirlandaio's frescoes in the Tornabuoni chapel in Santa Maria Novella in Florence, Warburg identified a maid servant in the image as a "nympha" – quite counter-intuitively, actually, given the fresco's subject of the birth of St. John. According to Ernst Gombrich, Warburg's biographer, she is confronting the late medieval group with 'the eruption of primitive emotion through the crust of Christian self-control and bourgeois decorum.'<sup>3</sup> Gombrich is of course reporting Warburg's reading, which is informed by concerns that were topical at the dawn of the twentieth century, but are decidedly anachronistic for the Quattrocento.

Warburg's notion of a "goddess in exile" taking on the role of a servant girl is largely based on a reading of the style of dress. But even more important for Warburg is the dynamism of the figure: this, more than any sartorial code, points to the nymph and the "pathetic formula" (*Pathosformel*) that describes her symbolic essence. As both his studies and his illness progressed, Warburg increasingly saw the nymph as an overarching cultural archetype: first as 'a universal ornamental type of the female form in motion', and then later as one of two seminal principles informing culture as such.<sup>4</sup> A few months before his death Warburg noted in his diary his conviction that all of Western cultural history was a continuous oscillation between two opposing yet conjoint psychological states. Warburg inserts the nymph into what is now called bipolar disorder: the ecstatic nympha is the manic, the dolorous river god the depressive pole.<sup>5</sup>

2 Warburg A., "The Art of Portraiture and the Florentine Bourgeoisie. Domenico Ghirlandaio in Santa Trinita: The Portraits of Lorenzo de' Medici and His Household (1902)", in idem, *The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity*, ed. Julia Bloomfield et al. [trans. from *Die Erneuerung der heidnischen Antike. Kulturwissenschaftliche Beiträge zur Geschichte der europäischen Renaissance*, ed. G. Bing in association with F. Rougemont, Leipzig: 1932] (Los Angeles, CA: 1999) 185–221, here 201.

3 Gombrich E.H., *Aby Warburg: An Intellectual Biography* (London: 1970) 125. The visual parallel with the annunciation is indeed a Renaissance idea. Leonardo da Vinci prescribes the same design of fluttering draperies for angels and nymphs, see Leonardo da Vinci, *Trattato della Pittura*, ed. A. Borzelli (Lanciano: 1947) § 527.

4 Warburg, "The Art of Portraiture and the Florentine Bourgeoisie" 201.

5 Didi-Huberman, *Ninfa moderna* 156; ibidem no. 306: Warburg, *Diary*, 3 April, 1929, quoted in Gombrich, *Aby Warburg* 303. See also: Pichler W. – Rapp W. – Swoboda G., "Metamorphosen des Flussgottes und der Nympe: Aby Warburgs Denk-Haltungen und die Psychoanalyse", in Marinelli L. (ed.), *Die Couch. Vom Denken im Liegen* (Munich: 2006) 161–186.

While this reading of the nymph as a generalised cultural symbol has inspired important studies with wide cultural implications, it remains unclear what kind of cultural signifier the nymph actually was in early modern contexts. As historians of culture, it is our task to question and to problematise Aby Warburg's identification of the moving maiden in flowing dress as a nymph. To begin with, it is doubtful that a fifteenth- or sixteenth-century viewer would have taken the servant girl as a *signifiant* for the concept of "nymph", as Agata Chrzanowska shows in her contribution. Second, from an early modernist point of view it is puzzling that Warburg identified the servant girl as a nymph on a fresco allegorising the Florentine bourgeoisie, although there would have been a wealth of actual representations of nymphs in early modern art that were also explicitly referenced as such at the time. Again, an early modern observer would probably have pictured a nymph as part of a nude collective preparing to take a bath in the river rather than a lone figure in classicising dress. Warburg's studies of the nymph have done much to draw scholars' attention to the subject and the symbolic depth of the figurations, but his tendency to place her on the sidelines of the visual and textual planes – as evidenced by his use of the phrase 'bewegtes Beiwerk' (a transitory ornament) – belongs to the process of marginalisation nymphs have undergone since antiquity. The objective of this volume is to recover the variety and diversity this figure once enjoyed in early modern works of literature and art.

Scholars have often looked back to antiquity in order to understand the nature of early modern nymphs. Beyond doubt, classical texts, especially poetry, from Homer to Virgil and Ovid, were of great importance for the construction of nymphs in early modern culture. Nevertheless, Renaissance nymphs were not just the result of careful philological reconstructions, and even less of archaeological fieldwork, although such scholarly research certainly took place at times. The creative freedom of early modern artists and writers seems to have been of much more importance. They did not feel obliged to follow textual examples literally; rather, they freely used their skills and understanding of visual media in order to bring forth impressive inventions, as Karl Enenkel shows in his contribution on the representations of the Ovidian myth of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus. The same goes, *mutatis mutandis*, for the nymphs' use and application in literature. The cultural technique of allegorical interpretation (much emphasised in the Middle Ages) remained of the highest importance in the early modern period and provided an almost inexhaustible source of new creations and uses of nymphs.

In classical antiquity, nymphs were female nature deities categorised according to their preferred dwellings: Nereids (sea), Naiads (rivers), Napeae (valleys), Dryads (forests), Hamadryads (trees), and Oreads (mountains). While

this taxonomy remained more or less stable, other aspects turned out to be more elusive and fuzzy. Also, classical sources are notoriously vague concerning the nymphs. They are often referred to as a collective, despite Ballentyne, in his comprehensive overview of the classical sources, having listed the names of 342 nymphs in Greek, and 197 in Roman sources.<sup>6</sup>

One must be aware that disciplines such as archeology, antiquarianism, anthropology, cultural studies and comparative history of religions only emerged in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Relatively clear categorisations of mythological figures, such as the list of nymphs according to their habitats, became common knowledge, conveyed among other things through mythographical compilations such as Giovanni Boccaccio's *Genealogiae deorum gentilium*.<sup>7</sup> In Boccaccio's work, which was composed in the fourteenth century, the above-mentioned disciplines were still largely absent. Boccaccio had no understanding of the connection of the nymphs with their actual cults in antiquity or of the enormous number, peculiarities, and wide geographical range of these local cults. The first mythographer who developed an understanding of the many local cults of Greek and Roman deities was the Ferrarese scholar Lilio Gregorio Giraldi with his groundbreaking *De deis gentium varia et multiplex historia* of 1548.<sup>8</sup> In the fifth "syntagma" (i.e. treatise) of his manual he deals with the nymphs. He immediately focuses on the great variety of meanings and appearances and always identifies the classical sources from which he took his information. After having supplied the above-mentioned categories, and even having added Lemniades (nymphs of the meadows) and Limnades (nymphs of the lakes and pools), he turns to the local cults:<sup>9</sup> Caberides, Dodonides, Cithaeroniades, Corycides, Anigrides, Ismenides, Sithnides, Amnisiades, Lusiades, Pterides, Heliades, and so on. In total, he lists more than sixty local cults, and even more names of individual nymphs.

6 Ballentyne F.G., "Some Phases of the Cult of the Nymphs", *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 15 (1904) 77–119, the list of names at 111–119.

7 *Genealogy of the Pagan Gods*, vol. II, ed. and trans. By J. Solomon (Cambridge, Mass.: 2017), book VII.

8 Basel, Johannes Oporinus: 1548. For Giraldi as a mythographer and antiquarian scholar cf. Enenkel K.A.E., "The Making of 16th Century Mythography: Giraldi's *Syntagma de Musis* (1507, 1511 and 1539), *De deis gentium historia* (ca. 1500–1548) and Julien de Havrech's *De cognominibus deorum gentilium* (1541)", in *Humanistica Lovaniensia* 51 (2002) 9–53, and Enenkel K.A.E., "Humanist Mythography between Cabinet of Rarities and Antiquarian Collection of Knowledge: Georg Pictorius", in Häfner R. (ed.), *Mythographie in der Neuzeit. Modelle und Methoden in Literatur, Kunst und Wissenschaft* (Heidelberg: 2016) 95–121.

9 Giraldi, *De deis gentium varia et multiplex historia* (Basel, Johannes Oporinus: 1548) 238–246.



However, until the middle of the sixteenth century, Giraldi's exposé did not reflect the common knowledge of nymphs, not even that of the humanists.

Nymphs are of special importance in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, one of the most influential works on Greco-Roman mythology. Some of Ovid's nymphs did attract sustained interest in cultural history: Daphne and Echo come to mind in particular, but only rarely has their status as nymphs been at the core of scholarly investigation. The names of others are better known – Salmacis, Callisto, Syrinx – but even they have not merited much specific critical research. In general, studies on the classical tradition do not devote much attention to the nymph. The impressive handbook *The Classical Tradition*, for instance, edited by Glenn Most, Anthony Grafton and Salvatore Settis, does not even award nymphs an entry.

In the representations of nymphs in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, eroticism and sexuality always play an important part. The nymphs are meant to stimulate the erotic imagination of the reader. Moreover, as the love interest of gods, they figure as targets of male desire, and more often than not, of sexual violence. In a sense, it is a "tough draw" to be a nymph in Ovidian poetry, as Christian Peters writes in his essay in this volume. However, not all nymphs were raped by Jupiter or other gods. The *metamorphosis*, often into a tree or a plant, is used as a standard means to prevent them from falling victim to violence. Moreover, in Ovid's poem the *metamorphosis* itself appears as a part of an erotic game. Among other things it makes it possible for the nymphs to be the objects of sexual longing while remaining unobtainable and beyond reach – even for the Olympic gods. As the myth of the nymph Salmacis shows, Ovid was also fascinated by the inversion of the accepted codes of gendered behaviour. Ovid's emphasis on the erotic and sexuality, and especially his play with gendered notions, evoked responses of early modern writers and artists. These aspects could have elicited special research from the perspective of gender studies which, however, has remained rather silent. In the present volume, three contributions are dedicated to a gender perspective on nymphs (*Enenkel, Peters, Traninger*).

However, not all early modern nymphs can be traced back to Ovid or to identifiable classical sources, and, as indicated above, there was (at least until the second half of the sixteenth century) no authoritative definition of the nymph from the perspective of archeology or the history of religion. As a consequence, the nymph could function as an immensely productive concept. It was so successful and pervasive precisely because it was fuzzy at its borders. Female figures appear to have seamlessly glided in and out of the realm of the nymphs. At times, being a nymph seems to have been thought of not so much as a semi-divine status than as a lifestyle. In Boccaccio's *Ninfale Fiesolano*,

nymphs are both mythological creatures and mortal girls who are given to the goddess Diana by their parents and who ‘thereby enter a semi-divine sphere through their contact with the world of the goddess’, as Christoph *Pieper* puts it in his contribution. But at times “nymph” does not point to any change of status. Confusingly, the term was used to address or refer to unmarried women, as does Shakespeare’s Hamlet in an aside as Ophelia approaches him (‘The fair Ophelia! Nymph, in thy orisons / Be all my sins remember’d.’),<sup>10</sup> or Bernardo González de Bobadilla, who describes his novel’s character Lydia as ‘vna hermosa Nimpha hija de vn rico aldeano’ (‘a beautiful nymph who was the daughter of a rich villager’).<sup>11</sup> Still, the address as “nymph” appears to have supplied connotations of a haughty elegance and distinguished demeanor. On the other hand, nymphs could equally be conceived as supernatural beings, such as Caliope in Cervantes’ *Galatea*, who manifests herself as a flame (only to sing the praises of the poets of Spain), or of course as incarnations of the Mother Goddess in folklore (*Roling*).<sup>12</sup>

But mostly nymphs were creatures of the in-between, mediating between the divine and human realms. They were depicted as elusive, yet approachable, and yet ultimately unavailable. Female in their demeanor, they were construed as enjoying a freedom that was unattainable for even the most privileged of women. Roaming the woods on their own, hunting and engaging in playful competition, refusing lovers and, of course, marriage – this was unheard-of behaviour for any woman in premodernity. Yet it seems that it is this construction of the nymph that provokes and invites the desire to hunt them down and to subjugate them.

With the term nymph having been liberally awarded to both deities and humans, figures could now be identified as nymphs that had not been categorised as such. Italian Humanist poetry, for example, introduced female characters that had hitherto been identified as elegiac *puellae*, but who were much better understood as nymphs, as Christoph *Pieper* shows. Yet while the early modern period already accepted a certain fluidity of the notion of the nymph, modern scholarship has not always been helpful in discerning nymphs from (young) women in general. Even in crucial passages dedicated to pastoral literature, such as in Boileau’s *L’Art poétique*, modern translators tended to neglect the

10 Shakespeare William, *Hamlet*, ed. A. Thompson – N. Taylor, The Arden Shakespeare Third Series (London etc.: 2006) Act 3, Scene 1.

11 González de Bobadilla Bernardo, *Ninfas y pastores de Henares* (Alcalá de Henares, Juan Gracián: 1587; facsimile Ministerio de Cultura: 1978).

12 Cervantes Miguel de, *La Galatea*, ed. F. López Estrada – M.T. López García-Berdoy (4th ed., Madrid: 2011) 559, 563–589.

specific wording offered by the sources, thus negligently blurring the lines between nymphs and other characters inhabiting pastoral settings. Nicolas Boileau, for example, compares the pastoral – or *idylle*, as he calls it – with a shepherdess (*bergère*) who is not in need of sumptuous garments and splendid jewels to look lovely (“Telle, aimable en son air, mais humble dan son style, / Doit éclater sans pompe, une élégante idylle”). His modern translator, Albert S. Cook, inexplicably renders ‘bergère’ as ‘fair nymph’ and thus introduces the mythical character where Boileau aims at metonymically invoking a natural loveliness that shines in the absence of artificial adornments.<sup>13</sup> As Anita Traninger shows in her contribution, narrated nymphs are, on the contrary, quite frequently described as just the opposite, as adorned so richly in precious garments and splendid jewelry that they conform more to a courtly ideal of femininity than to the embodiment of rural simplicity. That the sources handle the extension of the notion of “nymph” quite liberally should not acquit scholars of the necessary philological rigour.

In contrast to the Muses or the Graces, nymphs are not fixed in number. This potentiality opened up a hotbed of the imagination in the early modern period, since poets were free to introduce nymphs unknown to the classical sources: from the very beginning in the vernaculars, this led to a multiplication of nymphs who were typically awarded Greek-sounding names that were at times, through homophony, also thick with Latin or vernacular meaning, as Tobias *Leuker* demonstrates. Nevertheless, nymphs and muses in particular tended to be mixed up, which is why Isidore of Seville, as early as the seventh century, came up with an explanation for this confusion: ‘Nymphs are goddesses of the water, so to say the divine spirit of all fluid matters. Yet they are both called Muses and nymphs, and rightly so since the movement of water produces music.’<sup>14</sup>

13 Boileau Nicolas, *The Art of Poetry: The Poetical Treatises of Horace, Vida, and Boileau* (New York: 1926), quoted in Poggioli R., *The Oaten Flute. Essays on Pastoral Poetry and the Pastoral Ideal* (Cambridge, MA: 1975) 154. We quote the original French from Boileau-Despéaux N., *Die Dichtkunst. L'Art poétique*, ed. R. Schober (Halle/Saale: 1968). The jewels and fine tissues evoked in the verses are reminiscent of the lavish nymphs' dresses that are common in early modern Spanish literature (see the chapter by Anita Traninger in this volume), but the contrast Boileau builds on is rather that of rural simplicity vs. courtly conventions.

14 ‘Nymphas deas aquarum, quasi numina lympharum. Ipsas autem dicunt et Musas quas et nymphas, nec inmerito. Nam aquae motus musicen efficit’; Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae* VIII, 96, ed. W.M. Lindsay (7th ed., Oxford: 1987) (our translation). The confusion or at least the merging of nymphs and Muses remains a constant throughout the early modern period and up to the nineteenth century, cf. Francalanza É. (ed.), *Muses et nymphes du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Bordeaux: 2011).

The nymphs' association with music is highly productive in the early modern period. Nymphs who were called upon to mourn the dead inspired some of the most outstanding compositions by Josquin Desprez around 1500 (analysed by Wolfgang *Fuhrmann*), but they were also given a musical voice that resounded through the age. One of them was invoked in particular to join deceived or desperate lovers in their ordeal: the resounding Echo. Imagining Echo as a monosyllabic yet truthful conversation partner yielded a host of echo poetry in virtually all the European vernaculars.<sup>15</sup> It is equally productive in music, making the nymph's voice a mainstay both in song and on the early operatic stage. The nymph's voice is attributed psychological functions as a device for the characters' self-reflection in order to show an individual's inner presence on the musical stage, as shown by Michaela *Kaufmann* in her contribution.

The desire for nymphs to manifest themselves, for them to appear in the "real world", drove much of the artistic activities in the early modern period. The fifteenth century rumour that a fountain with an ancient sculpture of a sleeping nymph had been found near the Danube sparked a sustained literary and artistic engagement with sleeping nymphs, a history that is traced by Barbara *Baert* in her contribution, reflecting in particular on the nymph as a *genius loci*. Early modern garden architecture was driven by the desire to create encounters with nymphs, with artfully constructed perspectives and vistas that implicitly reflect on the difference between the visual and the sensual, on watching and touching. Eva *Krems* traces this fascination in French and Spanish contexts up to the eighteenth century and shows how mythological sculptural constellations were also meant to underline dynastic claims and genealogical pretensions, while Mira *Becker-Sawatzky* looks at Italian *ville di delizie*, spaces of elegant entertainment, conceived as sites for the study of literature and art, for hunting, agriculture, conviviality, and amorous encounters modeled on the pastoral tradition. Nymphs played a central role in these settings, resulting in grottoes and "nymphaea" as highly coveted architectural features of any courtly garden. In accordance with early modern painterly representations of nymphs which tended to depict them 'as nude as possible', as Karl *Enenkel* observes, even when drawing on intertexts that explicitly point out that the protagonists were dressed, the sculptural arts focused on the nymph as a nude. As such, she

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15 See e.g. Colby E., "The Echo-Device in Literature", *Bulletin of the New York Public Library* 23 (1919) 683–713, 783–804; Nanny M., "Textual Echoes of Echo", in Fischer A. (ed.), *Repetition* (Tübingen: 1994) 115–143; Ingen F. van, *Echo im 17. Jahrhundert. Ein literarisch-musikalisches Phänomen in der Frühen Neuzeit*, in *Mededelingen van de Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen, Afdeling Letterkunde, Nieuwe Reeks, Deel 65 no. 2* (Amsterdam: 2002).

was a focal point for ideas propounded by humanism and antiquarianism that drew on the cultural and social prestige created through the revival of classical antiquity.

As a nude and devoid of iconographical attributes, a nymph was hardly discernible from Venus or even Diana, yet as Mira *Becker-Sawatzky* argues, it is the context that makes the nymph, as she explains with a view to three nymph statues in Pirro de Visconti's villa at Lainate near Milan: 'would their ideally shaped silhouettes be transferred into a different context and into a different material, they could easily turn into Venus, the Graces, or, in a general sense, bathing women. However, surrounded by the grotto's tuff stone, under the dripping water, and carved in bright white marble closely connected to the semantics and aesthetics of the limpid fountain water, they are three of mythology's innumerable, timeless nymphs ambiguously situated between deities and humans, between fluid water and fleshy beautiful bodies, between lascivious smiles and shy gazes, between sexuality and chastity. This ambiguity appears to be their characteristic feature, as they are the wandering, amoral figures connected to metamorphoses in grottos.'

That the number of nymphs is infinite was the precondition and the root for the inspiration that was drawn from the figure of the nymph in the early modern period: this is how Boccaccio could imagine the beginnings of Florence in a group of nymphs that roamed the surrounding woods. This is how rivers and landscapes across Europe could be imagined as being inhabited by nymphs, be it the bay of Naples in Sannazaro's *Arcadia*, the river Tajo in Castile as Garcilaso de la Vega would have it or the river Pegnitz near Nuremberg, as the poets who formed the Pegnesischer Blumenorden claimed. Damaris *Leimgruber* unpacks the complex hybridisations of pagan and Christian concepts specifically in the Nuremberg poets' in the circle of Harsdörffer and von Birken literary staging of nymphs where she observes the 'nymphisation' of Christian allegories.

Andreas *Keller* highlights how the territorial politics of the early modern German lands called for localising the nymphs, ensuring that there was not a land without a nymph acting as the guardian of its natural riches and cultural achievements. And Christian *Peters* illustrates how nymphs continued to be invented for aetiological purposes by humanist authors in Italy, who not only deliberately deviated from Ovidian models in their appropriation of the great mythological master narratives of antiquity, but also made a point of relocating the personnel of ancient myth into new, contemporary settings.

The early modern period generally imagined nymphs as being around, as inhabiting the surroundings of the cities and dwelling in the rivers passing by those cities, in brief: as never being far from civilisation, yet still belonging to a marvelous other-world. Sebastiano del Piombo in his *Morte di Adone* (ca. 1512)



FIGURE 1.1 Sebastiano del Piombo, *Morte di Adone* (ca. 1512). Oil on canvas, 189 × 285 cm. Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi.

for example shows four nymphs in the nude, gathered under a tree, one in conversation with a winged putto, one looking on and touching the shoulder of a third, who, together with a fourth, is engaged in conversation with a satyr or faun, signalling to him that he should stop playing his flute in the face of the dying Adonis [Fig. 1.1]. The sequence of scantily clad female figures (the one in conversation with Amor without doubt Venus, even though she is not given discerning attributes), each adopting a different posture, covers the foreground, while Adonis is depicted lying rather unheeded on the ground, apparently in this very moment breathing his last. The group is near a shore, and across the water Venice's Palazzo Ducale, the Piazza di San Marco and the Campanile can be made out. Even though the angle does not look exactly right, it seems as if the group is on the Isola di San Giorgio Maggiore. The view of San Marco bears a rather unambiguous time stamp: The *torre dell'orologio*, which was completed in 1499, is visible at the end of St. Mark's square. At that time, the Isola di San Giorgio Maggiore was certainly not uninhabited. A Benedictine monastery had been on the island since the tenth century, including the church that would later be refashioned by Palladio. Thus the painting introduces two distinct temporalities. One is that of contemporary Venice, the bustling metropole, yet it is uncharacteristically depicted without any boats crossing the waters, thus placing the mythological group in a secluded otherworld, separated from

civilisation by perfectly calm water. Still, they appear approachable, a brief boat ride on a calm canal away, dwelling in the utmost vicinity of bustling city life. It is realistic surroundings, a point of view which does exist, yet a magically transformed landscape, a mythological dreamworld in lieu of the real life Benedictine monastery.

In the seventeenth century, antiquarians began to put together archaeology, literature and folklore in order to lay the groundwork for a comparative study of religion that would shed light on nymph cults, as Bernd Roling shows. At the same time the nymph entered medical discourse, giving her name to a female illness that attracted considerable attention among scholars.<sup>16</sup> It reached wider audiences and entered the public imagination with D.T. de Bienville's treatise *La Nymphomanie ou Traité de la fureur utérine* (1771) which described "nymphomanie" as a symptom of the *furor uterinus*. It manifested itself as "excessive" female desire.<sup>17</sup> "Nymphomanie" later apparently took on the form of a veritable epidemic as 'nineteenth- and early twentieth-century European and American doctors also diagnosed as nymphomaniacs those women whose "symptoms" consisted of committing adultery, flirting, being divorced, or feeling more passionate than their husbands. Physicians writing for a popular audience diagnosed nymphomania in those women who actively tried to attract men by wearing perfume, adorning themselves, or talking of marriage. In the late nineteenth century, therefore, even minor transgressions of the social strictures that defined "feminine" modesty could be classified as diseased.'<sup>18</sup>

As far as we are aware, the question of why the nymphs of all deities should be the inspiration for this illness has never been asked. It is clearly the myth of the sexually aggressive Salmacis, whose allegorical, moral, positive and critical interpretations Karl Enenkel traces in his contribution, who informs the modern notion of the nymph. By turning to the one nymph who stood out through her devious behaviour, the concept of *nymphomanie* proves ignorant of longstanding lines of thought in seeking out nymphs, who notoriously rejected male advances, as the patron deities for the 'disease'.

16 Cf. Hayd J., *Die Hysterie und Nymphomanie dargestellt in Doktorarbeiten des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts aus der Dr. Heinrich Laehr Sammlung* (PhD thesis Munich: 1968).

17 Bienville D.T. de, *La Nymphomanie, ou, Traité de la fureur utérine* (Amsterdam: 1784). For an extract and a summary of the argument cf. Steigerwald J., "D.T. de Bienville: *La Nymphomanie ou Traité de la fureur utérine* (1771)", in Behrens R. – Steigerwald J. (eds.), *Aufklärung und Imagination in Frankreich (1675–1810). Anthologie und Analyse* (Berlin: 2016) 395–419.

18 Groneman C., "Nymphomania: The Historical Construction of Female Sexuality", *Signs* 19, 2 (1994) 337–367, here 341.

Yet the shift in semantics already transcended medical discourse in the eighteenth century. When Louis-Antoine de Bougainville, who sought to circle the globe in the service of the French monarchy, finally reached Tahiti, he was confronted with liberal sexual mores and women presenting themselves in the nude without being aware of Christian notions of shame. He could not help but view Tahiti as 'Nouvelle-Cythère', a reincarnation of the classical love island of Kythera, and frame the Tahitian women as 'nymphs'. With that, he introduced them as exemplars of an unbridled sexuality to European collective imagination.<sup>19</sup> Yet it was a patriarchal society after all, and the Tahitian nymphs are offered to the European men by their own fathers and husbands as a sign of their hospitality. It is also the men who uncover the women: 'La plupart de ces nymphes étaient nues, car les hommes et vieilles qui les accompagnaient leur avaient oté le pagne dont ordinairement elles s'enveloppent.'<sup>20</sup>

In a sense, Bougainville's description echoes what art had done over the centuries: uncovering the nymphs, making them available to a viewer's desirous gaze. Yet at the same time, this is one of the first instances of a semantic reduction of the once many-faceted notion of the nymph. What is left from the nymphs' powerful and ubiquitous presence in premodern times is an inversion of what had traditionally been ascribed to them: chastity, elusiveness, liberty – now their name is used to denote compulsive behaviour and sexual availability. The nymphs, as the early moderns knew them, have departed.

Even though this volume contains fourteen contributions from literary studies, art history, music, architecture, and the history of knowledge, it can by no means claim to be exhaustive in its explorations of the figure of the nymph as a cultural notion, or claim to have taken in all the roles nymphs played in literature, drama, opera, the visual arts, or architecture of the early modern period. Nevertheless, we hope that the contributions of this volume outline some of the aspects that were conceived important in early modern representations of nymphs. Above all, this volume is dedicated to exploring the figure of the nymph in her manifold, and often contradictory, traits.

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19 Bougainville Louis-Antoine de, *Voyage autour du monde par la frégate La Boudeuse et la flûte L'Étoile*, ed. M. Hérubel (Paris: 1966) 205–231, here 205. Diderot, while attacking most of Bougainville's propositions concerning the Tahitian social order, nevertheless subscribes to his description of the women, see Diderot Denis, *Supplément au Voyage de Bougainville*, ed. H. Dieckmann (Geneva: 1955). On the debate see van Tilburg M., "The Allure of Tahiti: Gender in Late Eighteenth-Century French Texts on the Pacific", in: *History Australia* 3,1 (2006) 13.1–13.16, here 13.14. Van Tilburg argues that even modern scholarship has focussed on Tahiti as a 'sexual pleasure ground' (13.1).

20 Bougainville, *Voyage* 185.



**PART 1**

*Nymphs between the Visual Arts  
and Literature*





# Pleasures of the Imagination: Narrating the Nymph, from Boccaccio to Lope De Vega

Anita Traninger

## 1 Setting the Scene

According to one line of interpretation, Palma il Vecchio's painting *Bathing Nymphs* [Fig. 2.1] depicts the scene where the Goddess Diana learns of the Hamadryad Callisto's pregnancy.<sup>1</sup> Callisto had been raped by Jupiter, who had taken on the form of Diana herself. Diana, being a virgin and thus unable to read the signs that indicated Callisto's altered state, only discovered Callisto's pregnancy some months later when she undressed to take a bath with her fellow nymphs.<sup>2</sup> What we are shown is a type of functional nudity, a group of women undressed for the purpose of taking a bath. Only the supposed Callisto is still wearing a shirt, but she lifts it up in a manner that is even more suggestive than the plain nudity of the others. They have sheets of fabric with them, probably to wrap themselves in after their bath, but otherwise there are no significant pieces of clothing to be seen, suggesting that the bathers are somehow in their natural state.

The group is not far from the civilised world: a town with a castle can be seen on a hilltop in the background. Two figures wander along a path; a peasant is working in his fields with an ox. There are also hints of noble pastimes, as three hunters can be seen in pursuit of a deer to the right. Closer to our scene, which is encircled by trees and thus apparently taking place in a remote part of the forest, a shepherdess is seated under a tree watching her flock. This evokes the theme of Arcadia, the fictional pastoral landscape that serves as a kind of utopia where love is the only concern for elegant and cultured courtiers who masquerade as shepherds and shepherdesses.<sup>3</sup> This theme of love is enforced

1 A Hamadryad is a tree nymph. On the traditional categorisation of nymphs according to their dwellings, see the introduction to this volume.

2 Ovid, *Metamorphoses* II, 405–532, the scene of discovery at 460–464. Ovid narrates the myth also in *Fasti* II, 155–192.

3 The literature on Arcadia is extensive. See Snell B., "Arkadien. Die Entdeckung einer geistigen Landschaft (1945/1955)", in Garber K. (ed.), *Europäische Bukolik und Georgik* (Darmstadt:



FIGURE 2.1 *Palma il Vecchio, Bathing Nymphs* (ca. 1525/1528). Oil on canvas, 77.5 × 124 cm. Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien, Gemäldegalerie.

by a couple riding by on a horse, the woman dressed in red and riding with her legs to one side pushing against a man dressed in green sitting in front, their bodies being pressed together in a highly eroticised manner.

The theme of desire is taken up in the scene of the bathing nymphs. To the right, below the couple on horseback, we see satyrs wandering along the riverbank, apparently absorbed in conversation, but clearly on the move with the aim of getting to the group of nymphs. This world of nymphs and satyrs is distinguished from the background by a sharp line that indicates a steep escarpment bordering on the riverbank. Yet while this mythological world appears to be secluded from the surrounding activities, there is one intruder. Next to Callisto's head there is a secret observer, hiding behind the bushes and blending almost perfectly into the shrubbery. The two figures appear to incline towards each other in tacit yet distanced intimacy. It is the white feathers on his cap, suggesting that he might be a member of the noble hunting party that got lost in the woods, that not only echo Callisto's white shirt but that also give him away.

The image sets the stage for my discussion of how nymphs are represented in Italian, French, and Spanish narrative and poetry from the early modern period. These texts, despite being discussed today as pertaining to different national literary traditions, belong to a literary community that operates on the basis of the same classical legacy. Visual media – in particular painting and sculpture – provide the backdrop for my reflections on what texts do and do not do in comparison to images when it comes to nymphs. The premise of this paper is that the representation of nymphs differs radically between media, in particular between image and text. I will make this point in four steps. First I will look at how the gaze of an observer, so handily embodied by a figure right in Palma's painting, is mediated in narrative texts. Second, I will explore how the narrative description of nymphs' dress and bearing is used to evoke scenes of covering and uncovering female bodies. In a third chapter, I will discuss the nymphs' traditional association with water and how it was exploited for meditations on concealment and transparency. In a last chapter, I will look at how the texts themselves discuss and stage differences between media and what this implies for the notion of the nymph in the early modern period.

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1976) 14–43; Garber K., *Arkadien. Ein Wunschbild der europäischen Literatur* (Munich: 2009); Wehle W., "Arcadia. Eine Kunstwelt", in Stempel W.-D. – Stierle K. (eds.), *Die Pluralität der Welten. Aspekte der Renaissance in der Romania* (Munich: 1987) 137–165; Iser W., *Das Fiktive und das Imaginäre. Perspektiven literarischer Anthropologie* (Frankfurt a.M.: 1993) esp. 91–93.

## 2 The Gaze of the Observer

Were he more central to or more visible in the scene, the secret observer in Palma il Vecchio's *Bathing Nymphs* would be best identified as Actaeon, the hunter who stumbles upon Diana while she is bathing in the nude and is subsequently turned into a stag.<sup>4</sup> The myth of Actaeon has long served as a stock image of the secret observer viewing bathing beauties from behind some shrubbery,<sup>5</sup> yet Actaeon is actually not the typical observer of nymphs. According to Ovid's version of the myth, he does not purposefully spy on Diana and her entourage. Rather, he happens to pass by and enters a grotto where he stumbles upon the bathing group.<sup>6</sup>

The model of the secret observer, who purposely stalks others, is in fact not a man but a nymph: Salmacis. Despite being a Naiad, a nymph living near a pond, she has – according to Ovid's *Metamorphoses* – none of the characteristics usually ascribed to nymphs: she is not a hunter, she does not practice archery, and she does not engage in racing duels. Salmacis abstains from these gregarious pursuits and is essentially a loner: 'among the Naiads, she alone is not known to the swift Diana.'<sup>7</sup> Instead, she takes baths and spends her time combing her hair, using the water surface as a mirror to compare flattering styles. When she

4 Ovid, *Metamorphoses* III, 165–205. Actaeon sees Diana naked and is turned into a stag.

5 Cf. e.g. Barolsky P., "Domenichino's 'Diana' and the Art of Seeing", *Notes in the History of Art* 14, 1 (1994) 18–20. See also Eva Krems's critical discussion in this volume.

6 Ovid, *Metamorphoses* III, 177–182: '[Actaeon] qui simul intravit rorantia fontibus antra, / sicut erant, viso nudae sua pectora nymphae / percussere viro subitisque ululatibus omne / inplevere nemus circumfusaeque Dianam / corporibus texere suis; tamen altior illis / ipsa dea est colloque tenus supereminet omnis' – '[Actaeon] comes wandering through the unfamiliar woods with unsure footsteps and enters Diana's grove; for so fate would have it. As soon as he entered the grotto bedewed with fountain spray, the naked nymphs smote upon their breasts at sight of the man, and filled all the grove with their shrill, sudden cries. Then they thronged around Diana, seeking to hide her body with their own; but the goddess stood head and shoulders over all the rest'. If not stated otherwise, I quote text and translation from Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, ed. and trans. F.J. Miller, 2. vols., Loeb Classical Library (London – Cambridge, MA: 31977).

7 Ovid, *Metamorphoses* IV, 302–304: 'nympha colit, sed nec venatibus apta nec arcus / flectere quae soleat nec quae contendere cursu, / solaque naiadum celeri non nota Dianae'. It is this description of these activities (that Salmacis does not partake in) that Julian Kliemann takes to have inspired the games and contests depicted in Domenichino's *Diana with Nymphs at Play* (1617/18, Galleria Borghese, Rome), see Kliemann J., "Kunst als Bogenschießen. Domenichino's 'Jagd der Diana' in der Galleria Borghese", *Römisches Jahrbuch der Bibliotheca Hertziana* 31 (1996) 273–312, here 277f. For an extended discussion of Salmacis, see Karl Enenkel's essay in this volume.

falls in love with young Hermaphroditus, she tries to steal a kiss, and when he rejects her and threatens to leave, she pretends to withdraw but actually hides in a neighbouring grove.<sup>8</sup> Salmacis at the same time acts more “female” than other nymphs in that she refuses to take part in their competitive physical activities and rather idly tends to her beauty, and more “male” in that she adopts a forthright directness in expressing her desire for Hermaphroditus and makes him the object of her lustful gaze.

In a curious inversion of the gendered conventions of gazing that would inform all of the pastoral tradition, it is thus a *nymph* who provides the model for the customary male observer, who is literally never left out of the picture in the earliest vernacular texts that speak of nymphs in Arcadian settings.<sup>9</sup> The gaze of an observer, I would like to argue, is crucial for the notion of the nymph in the early modern period. Not only does the secret observer mirror our own gaze, being our fictional counterpart in the depicted world, he also embodies the dominant theme of vision and visibility, of gazing, spying and beholding that I hold to be at the core of tales as well as depictions of nymphs.

The gaze of an observer is an ordering element in pastoral narration. In the first Spanish pastoral novel ever published, *Los siete libros de la Diana* by Jorge de Montemayor (1559),<sup>10</sup> two shepherds, Sireno and Sylvano (who are united in their grief after having both been refused by the eponymous Diana) and the shepherdess Selvagia roam the forests of León when a sweet tune reaches their ears from the *prado de los laureles*. Walking towards the meadow, they are careful not to make noise lest they disturb the singers:

Y así su paso a paso se fueron hacia aquella parte donde las voces se oían, y escondiéndose entre unos árboles que estaban junto al arroyo, vieron sobre las doradas flores asentadas tres ninfas, tan hermosas que parecía haber en ellas dado la naturaleza muy clara muestra de lo que puede.<sup>11</sup>

8 Ovid, *Metamorphoses* IV, 337–340: ‘Salmacis extimuit “loca” que “haec tibi libera trado, / hospes” ait simulatque gradu discedere verso, / tum quoque respiciens, fruticumque recondita silva / delituit flexuque genu submisit [...]’.

9 See e.g. Boccaccio’s *Ameto* as discussed by Tobias Leuker in this volume.

10 Avallé-Arce J.B., *La novela pastoril española* (Madrid: 21974) 69–100; Johnson C.B., “Montemayor’s Diana: A Novel Pastoral”, *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies* 48, 1 (1971) 20–35; Wardropper B.W., “The *Diana*: Revaluation and Interpretation”, *Studies in Philology* 48 (1951) 126–144.

11 Montemayor Jorge de, *Los siete libros de La Diana*, ed. Asunción Rallo (Madrid: 42008) 11, 168–169. All translations are mine if not stated otherwise.

And so they went, step by step, towards the direction whence they heard the voices, and hiding between some trees which were close to the river, they saw three nymphs seated on the golden flowers, so beautiful that it seemed that nature had demonstrated with them of what it is capable.

From behind the trees they observe the three nymphs, thus assuming the gaze of the secret observer. The nymphs are sumptuously dressed, in white tunics with golden embroidery in the form of leaves. Strings of pearls are woven into their hair, and they wear precious jewellery.<sup>12</sup> The shepherds overhear the nymphs discuss Sireno's story, which is miraculously known to them, including their awareness of the tragic farewell that had taken place between Sireno and Diana at the very spot near the fountain where they were singing. Sireno is taken aback ('quedó fuera de sí') that the nymphs knew about his infelicitous fate. They overhear Dórida, one of the nymphs, explaining how she had become aware of Sireno's story: it was passed on to her by another concealed spectator. A shepherd named Celio had watched from behind the oak trees and turned what he saw into verse on the spot ('y la puso toda al pie de la letra en verso, de la misma manera que ella pasó').<sup>13</sup> Literary Arcadia apparently is a world of watching and being watched, yet it is the gaze of a *male* observer that defines the action.

While the concept of a nymph is inextricably intertwined with the gaze of an observer, and there is a gendered interaction of beholding and being the object of desire at work, there is an important difference to be made between the media of image and text. Jacopo Sannazaro's *Arcadia*, written around 1480 and first published in 1504 – a work that combined a vernacular version of the classical and humanist eclogue with Italian prose sections and that served as a model for pastoral poetry in all of the early modern period –<sup>14</sup> offers a

12 'Venían vestidas de unas ropas blancas, labradas por encima de follajes de oro, sus cabellos que los rayos del sol oscurecían, revueltos a la cabeza, y tomados con sendos hilos de orientales perlas, con que encima de la cristalina frente se hacía una lazada, y en medio de ella estaba una águila de oro, que entre las uñas tenía un muy hermoso diamante'. Montemayor, *La Diana* 11, 169. On the heroic conception of the nymph in Montemayor's novel see Damiani B.M., *Jorge de Montemayor* (Rome: 1984) 116–117.

13 Montemayor, *La Diana* 11, 170.

14 Cf. William Kennedy's concise summary of the work's sources and impact: 'Sannazaro blended all the foregoing elements of the pastoral tradition into a new synthesis. In *Arcadia* he imitated the form of the classical eclogue in the Italian vernacular and to it he joined the prose romance that Boccaccio had developed in Italian. Moreover, the poetic forms that Sannazaro achieved were more self-consciously classical. They were direct descendants of the Theocritan and Virgilian eclogue mediated by the Neo-Latin



scene in which the dangers of observing nymphs are reflected upon by the narrative's characters. On the day of the feast of Pales, the shepherds gather in her temple to venerate the goddess. A priest sacrifices a white lamb and then recites a lengthy prayer, which is pronounced four times. He addresses the disruption the shepherds inevitably bring to the Arcadian gods and then continues with a prayer for appeasement of the perturbed gods as well as for protection: 'do not permit that our unworthy eyes should ever see amid the forest the vengeful Nymphs, or naked Diana bathing in the cool waters [...]' ('Né consentire che gli occhi nostri non degni veggiano mai per le selve le vendiatrici ninfe, né la ignuda Diana bagnarse per le fredde acque [...]').<sup>15</sup> There is a certain irony in the fact that the narrator of this episode, Sincero, upon reaching the temple before the ceremony, had let his gaze wander to a nearby group of 'certain naked Nymphs who were standing, half-hidden as it were, behind the trunk of a chestnut tree' ('certe ninfe ignude, le quali dietro un tronco di castagno stavano quasi mezze nascose').<sup>16</sup> But there is more to this scene: it highlights what texts can do that images cannot. The priest asks Pales to keep the shepherds from accidentally stumbling upon Diana and her entourage (as happened to the unfortunate Actaeon), but in doing so, he evokes precisely that which is negated: the goddess can only be asked to prevent a chance encounter between deity and man by mentioning this very constellation (the priest even adds a sensual dimension by elaborating on the temperature of the water), thus putting before the eyes this very scene. Narration can take the form of grammatical negation while nevertheless instructing the reader to imagine nymphs, thus producing rhetorical *evidentia* while at the same time negotiating and reflecting on the gaze of the observer on more than one level.

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eclogues of Petrarch, Boccaccio, Giovanni Battista Mantuano, and Pontano. Sannazaro finally tightened the kind of prose links that Boccaccio had situated between the poems. In the process, he gave birth to a literary type that would be imitated for centuries to come'. Kennedy W.J., *Jacopo Sannazaro and the Uses of Pastoral* (Hanover / London: 1983) 36. On Sannazaro's dependence on and transformation of Virgil's *Eclogues*, see Töns U., "Sannazaros Arcadia. Wirkung und Wandlung der vergilischen Ekloge", *Antike und Abendland* 23 (1977) 143–161. For discussions of the work's European reception, cf. e.g. Reyes Cano R., *La Arcadia de Sannazaro en España* (Sevilla: 1973); Lavocat F., *Arcadies malheureuses: Aux origines du roman moderne* (Paris: 1998); Schäfer E., "Zur Sannazarius-Rezeption in der Renaissance-Bukolik", in Schäfer E. (ed.), *Sannazaro und die Augusteische Dichtung* (Tübingen: 2006) 249–275.

- 15 Sannazaro Jacopo, *Arcadia & Piscatorial Eclogues*, trans. R. Nash (Detroit: 1966) prosa III, 45; Sannazaro Jacopo, *Arcadia*, ed. F. Erspamer (Milan: 1990) 79.
- 16 Sannazaro, *Arcadia*, trans. Nash, prosa III, 43; Sannazaro, *Arcadia*, ed. Erspamer, 76.

### 3 Cover/Uncover: Dress Like a Nymph

To return to Palma il Vecchio's bathing nymphs, one more detail is important for our analysis. One latecomer joins the group who is fully dressed, but only partly visible since her face remains hidden by a branch. Her sleeve betrays a fine fabric that is slightly transparent, and the dress itself is flowing, cascading down in several layers. The material is clingy, and we can see the woman's legs pressing against the fabric. The yellow colour could be read as evoking gold. It is the style of dress as seen in Ghirlandaio's *Judith and Her Maid*<sup>17</sup> or, of course, in Ghirlandaio's *Birth of St John the Baptist* in the Tornabuoni chapel of Florence's Santa Maria Novella, on the servant figure that both Hippolyte Taine and Aby Warburg identified as a nymph.<sup>18</sup>

As Georges Didi-Hubermann has shown, Ghirlandaio's design can be traced back to a Roman relief now kept in the Louvre under the title *Les Sacrifiantes* that depicts priestesses at a sacrificial rite.<sup>19</sup> In poetry, the source for this loose garment, which is at the same time invisibly girded, is more straightforward: it is the dress of the goddess Diana, who is customarily awarded the epithet "succincta" (cf. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* III, 156). This refers to the girding of her dress, gathered up so as not to hamper her swift movements as a huntress.<sup>20</sup> Her

17 Domenico Ghirlandaio, *Judith and Her Maid* (1489), Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Preußischer Kulturbesitz. See on the reading of the maid as a nymph Zöllner F., "Achtung, Nympe im Untergeschoss", *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (6 February, 2013) 29.

18 The French art critic and historian Hippolyte Taine, to whom Warburg (and the Naturalists) owed the notion of *milieu* (see Gombrich E.H., *Aby Warburg: An Intellectual Biography* [London: 1970] 105), in his *Voyage en Italie* (first published in 1866) described the fresco in comparison with Ghirlandaio's *Birth of the Virgin* in the same cycle: 'Dans la *Nativité de la Vierge*, la jeune fille en jupe de soie qui vient faire visite est la demoiselle de bonne condition, sage et simple; dans la *Nativité de saint Jean*, une autre debout est une duchesse du moyen âge; près d'elle, la servante qui apporte des fruits, en robe de statue, a l'élan, l'allégresse, la force d'une nymphe antique, en sorte que les deux âges et les deux beautés se rejoignent et s'unissent dans la naïveté du même sentiment vrai'. Taine H., *Voyage en Italie*. Vol. 2. *Florence et Venise* (Paris: 1874) 148–149. The woman's dress is simply catalogued as a statue's robe, while it is the swiftness and force of her movement that identify her as a nymph – maybe an echo of the running and hunting nymphs in the *Metamorphoses* and other classical sources. Contrasting her with the other, "bourgeois" female figures, Taine senses a conjunction of two ages, classical antiquity literally entering contemporary, Quattrocento reality. For Warburg's interpretation of the fresco, see Agata Chrzanowska's essay in this volume and my discussion below.

19 Didi-Hubermann G., *Ninfa fluida. Essai sur le drapé-désir* (Paris: 2015) 46–62.

20 The girding is commonly accepted as Diana's iconographic attribute well into modernity. In Gustave Flaubert's *La Tentation de saint Antoine*, for example, the pagan gods defile

dress and its function is so distinct that it serves as a model for others. When Venus falls in love with Adonis, for instance, she abandons her usual haunts (Cythera, Paphos, Cnidos, the skies) to follow him around. Once incessantly tending to her beauty while reclining in the shadows of trees, she now roams the woods, '[...] over mountain ridges, through the woods, over rocky places set with thorns, she ranges with her garments girt up to her knees after the manner of Diana'.<sup>21</sup> And of course Diana's hiked up dress is that of the nymphs. The Naiad Syrinx, for example, wore her dress in such a similar fashion she could have been confused with the goddess herself.<sup>22</sup>

Renaissance iconography developed this into a taxonomy of styles. As Cesare Ripa prescribes, all nymphs, and in particular those in Diana's entourage, are to be shown 'succinctae', with high-girded dresses in white to signal their virginity: 'Tutte le Ninfe di Diana saranno vestite d'habito succinto, & di color bianco in segno de la lor virginità'. Characteristically, their arms and shoulders should be exposed, and they should be armed as well: 'Haueran le braccia, & spalle quasi nude, con arco in mano, & faretra al fianco'. Furs are optional, but they could be added to signify the nymphs' occupation as huntresses ('Potrebbe anco oltre il succinto vestimento adornare di pelle di varij animali per segno che sieno cacciatrici'). Variations could be introduced according to the nymphs' various dwellings. 'Hinnedi & napee', who live in the meadows, wear green and adorn their hair with flowers, 'dimostrano que che è lor naturale'.<sup>23</sup> Dryads and Hamadryads, tree and forest nymphs, appear without any headgear and in dark green dress, holding branches of trees in their hands. Naiads, who live in rivers, are shown with naked arms, legs, and feet and with light hair: 'Si fan con braccia, gambe, e piedi nudi, per significare la semplicità de l'acque, essendo elemento senza mistione. Li capelli chiari, lucenti, & sparsi significano l'acque correnti'.<sup>24</sup> Leonardo da Vinci, on the contrary, does not get tangled up with such details. For him, the drawing of a nymph

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in the saint's imagination, and among them 'DIANE, la tunique retroussée, sort du bois avec ses nymphes'. Flaubert G., *La Tentation de saint Antoine*, ed. C. Gothot-Mersch (Paris: 1983) 188.

21 Ovid, *Metamorphoses* x, 535–536: '[...] per silvas dumosaque saxa vagatur / fine genus vestem ritu succincta Dianae'.

22 Ovid, *Metamorphoses* I, 695–696: '[...] ritu quoque cincta Dianae / falleret et posset credi Latonia [...]'].

23 Ripa Cesare, *Iconologia overo descrittione di diverse imagini cauate dall'antichità, & di propria inuentione* (Rome, Faeii: 1603) 153. I have used the excellent digitised version provided by the University Library Heidelberg at <http://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/ripa1603> (17.05.2017).

24 Ripa, *Iconologia* 354.

is all about revelation: '[...] the limbs should only be disclosed in the case of a nymph or an angel, who are represented as dressed in flimsy garments which the driving winds impress around their limbs. In these and similar figures the shape of their limbs may perfectly well be revealed'.<sup>25</sup>

Long before Leonardo and Ripa laid down their parameters for depicting nymphs, Giovanni Boccaccio relied on the images and themes implicitly codified in antiquity. In his *Ninfale Fiesolano* (1344/46), a mythical pre-history of the Florentine region, Giovanni Boccaccio makes the goddess Diana, who is described exactly along Ovid's lines as wearing her dress 'girdled at the waist' ('cinta nel mezzo', ottava 12),<sup>26</sup> the venerated deity of the area. She gathers young women around her, both those who wished to remain virgins and those who were given to her by the families from the surrounding countryside. All of them 'were called nymphs in those days' ('tutte eran ninfe a quel tempo chiamate', ottava 9) and roamed the hills and forests with Diana. Boccaccio introduces a notion of the nymph that oscillates between deity and human being. He portrays 'being a nymph' as a way of life rather than a substantial form of being.

Once again, the nymphs are introduced via the gaze of an observer. The *Ninfale's* main character, the youth Africo, cannot deny himself spying on the group as they gather at a fountain, despite his father's warnings. One of the woodcuts made by Bartolommeo di Giovanni for a lost Quattrocento edition of the *Ninfale Fiesolano* takes up this key scene [Fig. 2.2]. It shows Africo, hidden behind a tree, beholding three nymphs who cool their naked feet in a small stream. Two of them are seated, having lifted their dresses above their knees,

25 Leonardo da Vinci, *Leonardo on Painting: An Anthology of Writings by Leonardo da Vinci with a Selection of Documents Relating to his Career as an Artist*, ed. M. Kemp, selected and trans. M. Kemp – M. Walker (New Haven – London: 1989) 156. Leonardo da Vinci, *Trattato della Pittura*, ed. A. Borzelli (Lanciano: 1947) § 527. '[...] solo farai scoprire la quasi vera grossezza delle membra ad una ninfa o ad un angelo, i quali si figurino vestiti di sottili vestimenti, sospinti o impressi dal soffiare de' venti; a questi tali e simili si potrà benissimo fare scoprire la forma delle membra'. Digital edition at: [http://www.liberliber.it/media/teca/libri/1/leonardo/trattato\\_della\\_pittura/html/index.htm](http://www.liberliber.it/media/teca/libri/1/leonardo/trattato_della_pittura/html/index.htm) (14.05.2017). Leonardo's approach is evidenced in his *Studies of Dancers*, at times referred to as *Dancing Nymphs* (ca. 1515), now in the Galleria dell'Accademia in Venice. I take the dating from Arasse D., *Leonardo da Vinci. The Rhythm of the World*, trans. Rosetta Translations (Old Saybrook, CT: 1998) 101.

26 I quote from: Boccaccio Giovanni, *Ninfale Fiesolano*, ed. Armando Balduino, *Tutte le Opere*, ed. Vittore Branca, vol. 3 (Milan: 1974). Boccaccio Giovanni, *The Nymph of Fiesole. Il Ninfale Fiesolano*, trans. D.J. Donno (New York: 1960).



FIGURE 2.2 *Bartolommeo di Giovanni, Woodcut made for a lost Quattrocento edition of Giovanni Boccaccio's *Ninfale Fiesolano*.*

dipping their toes into the water. The third is standing up, bending down a branch from a tree. She faces to the right, the same direction as Africo, and is dressed in a long flowing garment, girded under her breasts and then again at her waist, resulting in a generous gathering of fabric billowing around her midriff.<sup>27</sup>

Inevitably, Africo desperately falls in love with the nymph Mensola. After weeks of longing and looking for her, he eventually tracks three nymphs down deep in the forest and spies on them while they bare their legs to wash their feet (which are of course 'white and beautiful' – 'bianchi e belli', ottava 58 – despite the daily sprints over rough forest grounds). When he approaches them to ask about Mensola, they immediately take flight: 'Ah woe! they cried, raising their skirts to run more swiftly, exposing their pretty legs' ('Omè – gridaro; / alzando

27 Boccaccio Giovanni, *The Nymphs of Fiesole. With the Woodcuts made by Bartolommeo di Giovanni for a Lost Quattrocento Edition, Which Were Used to Illustrate Various Later Texts and Have Now Been Reassembled and Recut* (Verona: 1952); the particular woodcut is reproduced in *Virtue and Beauty. Leonardo's Ginevra de'Benci and Renaissance Portraits of Women*, exh. cat., National Gallery of Art Washington (Princeton – Oxford: 2001) 54.

i panni, le gambe vezzose, / per correr meglio, tutte le mostraro', ottava 64). Virtually at every turn of the narrative nymphs are described as exposing their limbs, be it when washing or refreshing themselves, be it when the mythical huntresses take flight and find themselves pursued as prey. Whether they act out of their own volition or in response to a threat, the bearing of flesh seems to be inevitably involved. The narrator's point of view at times follows Africo's longing glance, at times it appears omniscient or rather omnivident, shifting seamlessly between the two and mediating a gaze that is at the same time (and above all) the reader's.

Africo's ever more desperate attempts at seeing Mensola again keep failing, despite being counselled by Venus herself, who appears to him in a vision. By definition the chaste Diana's antagonist, Venus eventually suggests that Africo disguise himself as a nymph in order to be able to approach Mensola and to win her trust (ottava 200f.). He finds himself a gown in his mother's wardrobe, and with his loose blond hair ('i suoi capelli, non già pettinati', ottava 211) and his pale face, he easily passes for a girl – 'e femina di maschio trasmutato' (ottava 212). Immediately after changing into his apparel, he chances upon a nymphal hunting party and impresses them by killing a wild boar. It is not just by his appearance but clearly by his hunting skills that they recognize him as one of their own. Africo stays with them, engaging in shooting contests, eating and drinking together – and Mensola starts to fall in love with her/him.

But while these scenes (ottava 215–234) provide ample descriptions of vigorous movements that inevitably result in bare limbs when "real" nymphs are concerned, there is not a single instance where the *narrator* would confuse disguised Africo with a nymph. Africo is never subjected to the gaze that is, in narration, translated into the habitual and constant mentioning of exposed body parts (typically conjoined with comment on their beauty). Despite briefly entering a lesbian romance, Africo is exempt from an observer's lusting gaze that is otherwise part and parcel of the concept of a nymph. While roaming the woods with Mensola and her fellow nymphs, the group 'came upon two nymphs bathing entirely naked in a pool where the two mountains meet. Joining them, they lifted their skirts and waded into the chilly water' ('trovaron due ninfe tutte ignude, / che 'n un pelago d'acqua erano entrate, / dove l'un monte con l'altro si chiude; / e giunte lì, sebbon le gonne alzate, / e tutte entrâr nell'acque crude', ottava 235). Africo does not undress until all the others are in the water and literally disarmed, having left their bows on the shore. His nudity then is devoid of any allure; rather, he presents them with a full-frontal threat, 'mostrando tutto ciò ch'avea davante' ('showing everything he had in front', ottava 239, my translation). While the other nymphs flee, grabbing their

garments and not even taking the time to get dressed, Africo rapes the weeping and desperately wriggling Mensola in the water (ottava 244).<sup>28</sup>

The sheer brutality of the act (which is implicitly commented on in the text in that Mensola is described as crying incessantly afterwards and eventually trying to kill herself – ottava 248) is thick with meaning beyond the obvious physical violation. While pastoral in general negotiates gender relations,<sup>29</sup> the figure of the nymph serves as a particular focal point for putting (male) phantasies of conquest and a (female) quest for independence in stark contrast. Under the protection of Diana, nymphs may be the emblematic objects of male desire, but their existence is about asserting a female liberty that consists in negating the yoke of marriage.<sup>30</sup> It is telling that this stance has traditionally been coded as “virginity” and thus reduced to a function in precisely the patriarchal framework the figure of the nymph challenges and transcends.<sup>31</sup>

The most conspicuous semiotic code for this liberty is the nymphs’ hair, which is typically described as unbraided and unadorned. Ovid describes the nymph Daphne’s hair as tousled ‘sine lege’<sup>32</sup> – which to me is more than saying that her hair was ‘straying’ (Melville), ‘unordered’ (Golding), or ‘unarranged’

28 On the ensuing transformation of their relationship into a consensual one which appears as the precondition for turning the story of Africo and Mensola into a founding myth, cf. Gittes T.F., *Boccaccio's Naked Muse: Eros, Culture, and the Mythopoetic Imagination* (Toronto: 2016) 112–115; Barsella S., “Myth and History: Toward a New Order (*Ninfale Fiesolano*)”, in Kirkham V. – Sherberg M. – Smarr J.L. (eds.), *Boccaccio. A Critical Guide to the Complete Works* (Chicago, IL – London: 2013) 145–153.

29 See my forthcoming “Im Tal der Tränen. Landschaft und die Kultur des Weinens in der *novela pastoril*”, in Doering P.C. – Full B. – Westerwelle K. (eds.), *Die Erfindung von Landschaft in Mittelalter und Renaissance* (Würzburg: 2018); Vaught J.C., “Men who Weep and Wail: Masculinity and Emotion in Sidney’s *New Arcadia*”, *History Compass* 2, 1 (2005) 1–16; Rhodes E., “Skirting the Men: Gender Roles in Sixteenth-Century Pastoral Books”, *Journal of Hispanic Philology* 11, 2 (1987) 131–149.

30 From there it is only a small conceptual leap to a semantic inversion of the notion of the chaste nymph: in the Spanish Golden Age, “ninfá” also becomes a synonym for “prostitute”, see Cantizano Pérez F., “De las ninfas del Olimpo a las ninfas de las tasqueras: una visión de la prostitución en la España del Siglo de Oro”, *eHumanista* 15 (2010) 154–17; also Bravo Vega J., “Ninfá’ intertextual: actualización de un modelo literario”, *AISO Actas* VI (2002) 365–372, esp. 369.

31 To describe a nymph as a ‘Venus virgo’, as Ulrich Raulff would have it, makes sense only through the lens of male desire, not with regard to her culturally encoded identity. See Raulff U., “Die Nymphe und der Dynamo. Warburg und der Jugendstil”, in Raulff U., *Wilde Energien. Vier Versuche zu Aby Warburg* (Göttingen: 2003) 17–47, here 19.

32 Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 1, 477.

(Miller/Goold).<sup>33</sup> The turn of phrase is an echo of the description of the Golden Age that saw humankind honour 'good faith and righteousness' without obeying any law ('sine lege fidem rectumque colebat').<sup>34</sup> Taming a nymph's hair is not an exercise in beautification. Apollo's phantasies of dominating or "possessing" Daphne crystallise in the metonymy of dressing her hair: 'He sees the loose disorder of her hair / And thinks what if it were neat and elegant!' (Melville). 'Her hair unkemmed about her neck down flaring did he see; / "O Lord, and were they trimmed," quoth he, "how seemly would she be!"' (Golding). The translations make it look as if it was style or polishedness that Daphne is lacking, but Ovid stops short at the 'what if' of combing: 'spectat inornatos collo pendere capillos / et "quid, si comantur?" ait.'<sup>35</sup> There is no word of elegance or style, but a vision of subjugating a perceived freedom under the societal regulations that inform female dress and hairstyle. What Apollo muses about is not making Daphne more beautiful or comely, but making her his – in fact it is subjugation under the patriarchal law that is at stake here.

The nymphs' liberty, expressed in a looseness of dress and untamed hair, is lauded by Cervantes' Don Quijote as the lost privilege of unmarried women in his famous speech on the Golden Age before an audience of goatherds:

Entonces sí que andaban las simples y hermosas zagalejas de valle en valle y de otero en otero, en trenza y en cabello, sin más vestidos de aquellos que eran menester para cubrir honestamente lo que la honestidad quiere y ha querido siempre que se cubra [...].

In that time simple and beautiful unmarried girls could wand from valley to valley and hill to hill, their hair hanging loose or in braids, wearing only the clothes needed to modestly cover that which modesty demands, and has always demanded [...].<sup>36</sup>

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33 In addition to Miller's translation I refer to Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. A.D. Melville (Oxford etc., 1986); Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. A. Golding, ed. M. Forey, Penguin Classics (London etc.: 2002).

34 Ovid, *Metamorphoses* I, 90: 'without a law, of its own will'.

35 Ovid, *Metamorphoses* I, 497–498.

36 Cervantes Miguel de, *Don Quijote de la Mancha*, ed. J.J. Allen, 2 vols. (Madrid: 242004) I, XI, 170. Cervantes Miguel de, *Don Quixote*, trans. E. Grossman (New York, etc.: 2003) 77 (with my changes: Grossman renders 'zagalejas' too narrowly as 'shepherdesses').



While tousled and untamed hair was the Quattrocento *tertium comparationis* when a woman was described as a nymph, as Aby Warburg attests,<sup>37</sup> the modesty of dress highlighted by Don Quijote was clearly not at the core of the early modern notion of a nymph's dress. When it became common in Renaissance court festivals for all women to appear in nymphs' dress, irrespective of their actual role, it was surely not for the simplicity of the dress option, on the contrary: 'it has become an invariable custom for the ladies to be dressed in the nymphal style, even where they themselves are nothing but shepherdesses: a costume that entails ornaments and graces far superior to their condition' ('Come che in queste sia già accettato per vso irreuocabile l'abbigliare le Donne alla Ninfale, ancora ch'elle fossero semplici Pastorelle; il qual habito riceve ornamenti, & vaghezze assai sopra la loro conditione').<sup>38</sup>

Thus when Jorge de Montemayor announces in the *argumento* of *La Diana* that he will tell stories that have actually happened under pastoral disguise ('casos que verdaderamente han sucedido, aunque van disfrazados debajo de nombre y estilo pastoril'),<sup>39</sup> the term *disfraz* (disguise) may well be taken to extend to the nymphs' costumes that could have been familiar to readers from courtly entertainments. When the lovesick shepherds and shepherdesses that make up the collective cast of the novel are greeted by a large group of beautiful nymphs as they arrive at the palace of the wise Felicia, the nymphs appear just as they would in a court performance: 'Todas venían vestidas de telillas blancas muy delicadas, tejidas con plata y oro sotilísimamente, sus guirnal-das de flores sobre los dorados cabellos, que sueltos traían' ('They all came

37 Warburg A., "Sandro Botticelli's Birth of Venus and Spring. An Examination of Concepts of Antiquity in the Italian Early Renaissance (1893)" in Warburg A., *The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity*, ed. Julia Bloomfield et al. [trans. from *Die Erneuerung der heidnischen Antike. Kulturwissenschaftliche Beiträge zur Geschichte der europäischen Renaissance*, ed. G. Bing in association with F. Rougemont, Leipzig: 1932] (Los Angeles, CA: 1999) 89–156, here 134.

38 Angelo Ingegneri, *Discorso della poesia rappresentativa & del modo di rappresentare le favole sceniche* (Ferrara, Vittorio Baldini: 1598) 72; discussion and translation in Warburg, A., "Theatrical Costumes for the Intermedi of 1589. Bernardo Buontalenti's Designs and the Ledger of Emilio de' Cavalieri (1895)", in Warburg A., *The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity*, ed. Julia Bloomfield et al. (Los Angeles, CA: 1999) 349–401, here 382. Women dressed as nymphs appeared in pageants as early as 1454, as is attested for a procession on the occasion of a feast of the birth of Saint John the Baptist, see Warburg, "Sandro Botticelli's Birth of Venus and Spring" 155, n. 166; also Warburg "The Theatrical Costumes for the Intermedi", Addendum 262, 465f. Maddalena Gonzaga entered Pesaro for her wedding in 1489 dressed as a nymph, see Warburg, "Theatrical Costumes for the Intermedi", Addendum 155, 430–432.

39 Montemayor, *La Diana* 108.

dressed in very delicate white cloth, finely embroidered with silver and gold, and with garlands of flowers on their golden hair, loosely worn').<sup>40</sup> This pattern of flimsy yet precious garments, loose hair, and gold or silver embroidery, often in combination with jewelry is not only repeated in countless variations; the sumptuousness appears to have been continually augmented. In Gil Polo's continuation of Montemayor's novel, *Diana enamorada* (1564), the nymphs' luxuriousness reaches the extremes: six of them appear dressed in crimson satin decorated with gold and silver leaves, their hair contained in nets made of gold threads from Arabia, held in place by barrettes made from rubies and emeralds, and each wearing a single, extremely valuable diamond on their foreheads. Despite their extravagant dress, they are still equipped as huntresses, carrying bows and wearing their quivers slung over their shoulders.<sup>41</sup> And when in Honoré d'Urfé's *L'Astrée* (1607–1621) the shepherd Celadon is rescued from a river by three nymphs, the emphasis may be again more on the uncovered limbs, but pearls, ivory and golden lace-up boots mark the nymphs' luxurious accoutrements:

Et lors qu'il estoit entre la mort et la vie, il arriva sur le mesme lieu trois belles Nymphes, dont les cheveux espars alloient ondoyans sur les es-paules, couverts d'une guirlande de diverses perles: elles avoient le sein decouvert, et les manches de la robe retroussées jusques sur le coude, d'où sortoit un linomple deslie, qui froncé venoit finir aupres de la main, où deux gros bracelets de perles sembloient le tenir attaché. Chacune avoit au costé le carquois rempli de flesches, et portoit en la main un arc d'ivoire; le bas de leur robe par le devant estoit retroussé sur la hanche, qui laissoit paroistre leurs brodequins dorez jusques à my jambe.<sup>42</sup>

While pertaining to a pastoral realm that is often described in terms of opposition between *corte* and *aldea*, between courtly artifice and rural simplicity,

<sup>40</sup> Montemayor, *Diana*, 256–257.

<sup>41</sup> Gil Polo Gaspar, *Diana enamorada*, ed. F. López Estrada (Madrid: 1987) 277–278: 'Salieron luego de través seis ninfas vestidas de raso carmesí, guarnecido con follajes de oro y plata, puestos sus cabellos en torno de la cabeza, cogidos con unas redes anchas de hilo de oro de Arabia, llevando ricos prendedores de rubines y esmeraldas, de los cuales sobre sus frentes caían unos diamantes de extremadísimo valor. Calzaban colorados borceguines, sutilmente sobredorados, con sus arcos en las manos, colgando de sus hombros las aljabas'.

<sup>42</sup> I have consulted the excellent digital edition that allows for a comparison of the early modern editions of the text with a modern French version, see Henein E. (ed.), *Deux visages de L'Astrée* (Medford, MA: Tufts University, 2005–2016) I, 1. URL: [http://astree.tufts.edu/\\_roman/reference/21\\_1/21\\_1\\_livre\\_1.html](http://astree.tufts.edu/_roman/reference/21_1/21_1_livre_1.html) (17.05.2017).

the nymphs are imagined as showcasing a luxurious apparel that would be the envy of every court lady. Even though they supposedly embody the pastoral otherworldliness, they conform to the contemporary notions of luxury, refinedness, and courtly comportment. When the shepherdesses are hosted by the wise Felicia in Montemayor's *La Diana*, they undergo a kind of *rite de passage*, taking on the nymphs' habits by taking a bath in a luxurious indoor pool, and then being dressed as nymphs.<sup>43</sup> The description of the garments is extensive, running over almost twenty lines and indicating more than anything that a nymph's dress is, in the early modern period, the acme of courtly conspicuous consumption. The reference to a nymph's dress becomes shorthand for sumptuous garments, like for example in Cervantes' last, posthumously published novel *Los trabajos de Persiles y Sigismunda*. When Taurisa, the eponymous Sigismunda's gentlewoman, receives new clothes, no details are offered, just a general reference that apparently is thought to suffice for the reader to understand what to picture: 'They dressed Taurisa richly and elegantly in the style that water or mountain nymphs usually dress themselves.'<sup>44</sup>

To describe early modern nymphs as elemental spirits thus does not do justice to the complex imagination that informed the figure of the nymph in the Renaissance, a figure 'who evolved, through the fruitful interaction of the arts, as the Renaissance type of the young woman of classical antiquity'.<sup>45</sup> For Aby Warburg, particularly in his early writings, the figure of the nymph is a *product* of the Renaissance, 'an offspring of a multiple conjunction of art and archaeology, such as only the Quattrocento could produce'.<sup>46</sup> Despite her rather precise specifications as detailed above, she 'supplied a general feminine type, both in historical and mythological subjects'.<sup>47</sup> Little wonder that Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia* prescribed that humanity itself be depicted 'con habito di Ninfa, & viso ridente'.<sup>48</sup>

These insights predate Warburg's famous "Fragment on the Nympha" where he focuses his interest and, indeed, his desire on the figure of a servant girl

43 Montemayor, *La Diana* IV, 267–268.

44 Cervantes Miguel de, *The Trials of Persiles and Sigismunda. A Northern Story*, trans. C.R. Weller – C.A. Colahan (Indianapolis, IN – Cambridge: 1989) 27. 'Vistieron a Taurisa rica y gallardamente, al modo que suelen vestirse las ninfas de las aguas, o las hamadriades de los montes'. Cervantes Miguel de, *Los trabajos de Persiles y Sigismunda*, ed. C. Romero Muñoz (Madrid: 2004) 141.

45 Warburg, "Theatrical Costumes for the Intermedi" 379.

46 Ibidem 381.

47 Ibidem.

48 Ripa, *Iconologia* 216: 'in a nymph's dress and with a smiling face'.

in Ghirlandaio's *Birth of St. John*, which is part of the Tornabuoni frescoes in Florence's Santa Maria Novella.<sup>49</sup>

His reflections are the starting point for a fictitious epistolary exchange with the Dutch literary and cultural historian André Jolles. Here Warburg moves beyond his previous source-based historical studies and at the same time partakes in some of the codes and conventions that have traditionally informed the concept of a nymph. Both men's fascination with the theme begins with the virtually canonical display of fervent male desire that targets an elusive female figure. Jolles, in a letter dated 23 November, 1900, claims that he has fallen in love with a woman, and a painted woman at that:<sup>50</sup> it is the young servant figure that enters the scene of the birth of St. John from the right [Fig. 5.1]. Jolles describes her as floating or flying rather than running and struggles to categorise her appropriately: 'Eine fantastische Figur, nein ein Dienstmädchen, nein eine klassische Nymphe kommt, auf ihrem Kopfe eine Schüssel mit herrlichen Südfrüchten tragen[d], mit weit wehendem Schleier ins Zimmer hinein' ('A fantastic figure – should I call her a servant girl, or rather a classical nymph? – enters the room with a billowing veil, carrying a bowl with delicious tropical fruits on her head').<sup>51</sup>

49 This fragment has elicited intense critical attention, with many contributions exploring its wider implications for cultural theory, cf. e.g. Weigel S., "Aby Warburgs 'Göttin im Exil'. Das 'Nymphenfragment' zwischen Brief und Taxonomie, gelesen mit Heinrich Heine", in Kemp W. – Mattenklott G. – Wagner M. – Warnke M. (eds.), *Vorträge aus dem Warburg-Haus*, vol. 4 (Berlin: 2000) 65–103; Raulff, *Wilde Energien*; Agamben G., *Nymphae* (Berlin: 2005); Michaud P.-A., *Aby Warburg and the Image in Motion*, trans. S. Hawkes (New York: 2007); Baert B., *Nymph. Motif, Phantom, Affect. A Contribution to the Study of Aby Warburg* (Leuven: 2014); Didi-Huberman, *Ninfa fluida*.

50 Falling in love or, rather, being erotically attracted to a painting appears to not have been a completely isolated and deviating affect. When the diplomat Horace Mann bought a portrait of Bianca Cappello, then attributed to Giorgio Vasari, in Florence in 1753 for his friend and correspondent Horace Walpole, rather than sending it straight to England, he had it mounted in his bedroom. In a letter he confesses to Walpole that he has fallen in love with the portrait, 'to which, as your proxy, I have made love to a long while, and will now own to you that I have been in possession of it some little time. It has hung in my bedchamber and reproached me indeed of infidelity, in depriving you of what I originally designed for you, but as I had determined to be honest at last I could not part with it too hastily'. *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, ed W.S. Lewis, 48 vols. New Haven, CT 1937–1983, vol. 20, From Mann, 9 November 1753, S. 397–401, here S. 398.

51 Warburg A., "Ninfa Fiorentina (1900)", in Warburg A., *Werke in einem Band*, ed. M. Treml – S. Weigel – P. Ladwig (Frankfurt a. M.: 2010) 198–210, here 200. The translation is Ernst Gombrich's with my changes. Gombrich inexplicably left out the part on the fruit bowl, see Gombrich, *Aby Warburg* 107. While Jolles' description is in most regards suspiciously

Contrary to Warburg's earlier insights, but in line with Hippolyte Taine's,<sup>52</sup> the *nympha* is now 'an elemental sprite, a pagan goddess in exile' ('ein Elementargeist, eine heidnische Göttin im Exil').<sup>53</sup> While he had earlier stressed that the Renaissance nymph was a complexly layered construct, the *nympha* now appears as a time capsule from classical antiquity, displaced in time and space. But it is not the study of antiquity as such that guides the fascination, but a bigger idea, namely that the nymph is the epiphenomenon of a certain affective force that informs cultural artefacts.<sup>54</sup> The *nympha* is indeed an 'embodiment of pagan, sensuous delight',<sup>55</sup> but strictly in response to contemporary concerns: she is 'the eruption of primitive emotion through the crust of Christian self-control and *bourgeois* decorum'.<sup>56</sup>

'Antiquity', metonymically embodied by the *nympha*, is then not an emblem of *gravitas* in the sense of Winckelmann's classicism ('edle Einfalt stille Größe' – 'noble simplicity, quiet grandeur'), but a disruptive force that resists and undermines latter-day constraints.<sup>57</sup> This force, *pace* Warburg, manifests itself in wind-blown hair and fluttering hems. The focus on moving garments, however, is motivated primarily by contemporary concerns, voiced in debates about "reform dress" and women's liberation epitomised in the rejection of whalebone corsets<sup>58</sup> – a novel image of women that not only served their emancipation, but also elicited a new type of male fantasy, as Kurt W. Forster comments: 'Under this quizzical gaze, the "nymph" is revealed as a late Victorian male fantasy, an erotic wish fulfilment par excellence. Because the

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close to Taine's (see n. 18 above), he is the first to mention the fruit bowl. It is remarkable that among the various features that are conceived as indicating a nymph the fruit bowl is neglected, even though there is a literary pretext for precisely this detail in Sannazaro's *Arcadia*: 'the Nymphs who dwell nearby [...] are all of them coming now with their white baskets full of flowers and fragrant fruits [...]' ('[...] le convicine Ninfe [...] vengono ora tutte con canistri bianchissimi pieni di fiori e di pomi odoriferi a renderti i ricevuti onori'). Sannazaro, *Arcadia*, trans. Nash, prosa 5, 60; Sannazaro, *Arcadia*, ed. Erspamer, 101.

52 See n. 17 above.

53 Gombrich, *Aby Warburg* 124.

54 Forster K.W., "Introduction", in Warburg A., *The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity*, eds. Julia Bloomfield et al. [trans. from *Die Erneuerung der heidnischen Antike. Kulturwissenschaftliche Beiträge zur Geschichte der europäischen Renaissance*, ed. G. Bing in association with F. Rougemont, Leipzig: 1932] (Los Angeles, CA: 1999) 1–75, here 21.

55 Gombrich, *Aby Warburg* 121.

56 Gombrich, *Aby Warburg* 125.

57 Raulff, "Die Nympe und der Dynamo" 21.

58 Gombrich, *Aby Warburg* 109. On how the interest in "reform dress" ties in with *Art Nouveau* painting and Isadora Duncan's expressive choreographies, see Raulff, "Die Nympe und der Dynamo" 30–33.

forms in which she is represented largely deprive her of her own sexuality, the nymph appears passive and receptive to fantasy projections. She owes her “radiance” to her apparent “detachment”; she owes her freshness to a state of androgyny. She herself is not necessarily “moved” but addresses the beholder’s feelings through her “accessory forms in motion”.<sup>59</sup>

What has been the constellation of nymph-man relations at least since Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* thus still informs the modern intellectual take on the figure of the nymph. The notion of the nymph, as dialogically produced by Warburg and Jolles in 1900, builds on centuries-old habitus and conventions: the male gaze, the elusive nymph, the suggestive dress, and the pleasures of the imagination.

#### 4 Water: Concealment and Transparency

More than wind and movement, water plays a crucial role in the early modern idea of the nymph as the object of a desirous gaze. I would contend that it is water, the element nymphs were traditionally predominantly associated with,<sup>60</sup> that above all sparks the early modern imagination and serves to underline and amplify the theme of vision and visibility.

We have discussed Africo’s underwater rape of Mensola in Boccaccio’s *Ninfale Fiesolano*, but this vile transgression is by far not the norm. It is rather scenes of pursuit that fill pastoral texts, and as long as there is no verbal interaction with humans involved,<sup>61</sup> nymphs are at times described as being nude – their nudity often, but not necessarily, motivated by them entering or emerging from water. In Sannazaro’s *Arcadia*, ‘naked Nymphs [...] were standing, half-hidden as it were, behind the trunk of a chestnut tree, laughing at a ram who because of being intent on biting an oaken garland that was hanging

59 Forster, “Introduction” 19.

60 See Ballentyne F.G., “Some Phases of the Cult of the Nymphs”, *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 15 (1904) 77–119, esp. 77–97. See also Christoph Pieper’s essay in this volume, in particular his account of the Quattrocento predilection for Naiads.

61 Cf. the debates about Titian and Giorgione’s *Concert champêtre* (1509), where naked nymphs mingle with fully dressed courtiers. A scene like this is, to my knowledge, unheard of in early modern literature. Students of the Titian/Giorgione painting have searched for ways to explain away what was held to be obscene, e.g. by arguing that the women were nymphs and as such actually invisible for the men, cf. Fehl P., “The Hidden Genre: A Study of the Concert Champêtre in the Louvre”, *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 16, 2 (1957) 153–168, esp. 157.

before his eyes was forgetting to crop the grasses that grew round about.’<sup>62</sup> As four satyrs stealthily sneak up to seize them from behind, they flee through the thick woods, eventually escaping by swimming across a river, then sitting on the opposite bank panting and with dripping wet hair.<sup>63</sup>

When the nymphs cross the river, it is stressed that ‘the crystal waves were hiding little or nothing of their white bodies’ (‘le chiare onde poco o niente gli nascondevano de le bianche carni’).<sup>64</sup> In terms of how the reader’s imagination is guided here, the text introduces a transparent layer – the crystal clear water – that covers yet is not able to hide the nymphs’ white bodies. While the nymphs’ nudity was matter-of-factly stated as long as they did not become aware that they were being observed and stalked, their nakedness is a concern now that there is a new threatening presence that lusts after them and leers at them from the shore. The reader is made aware of their nudity in a new way, one that is different from when it was just the narrator (and with him, the reader) who observed the giggling group. The brief sentence about the water not hiding the bodies is an internal focalisation: it is narrated from the nymphs’ point of view. This also entails that the narratee is framed as a secret observer, one whose presence and gaze the nymphs are not aware of. Agency is delegated to the satyrs, and it is their gaze and in particular their chase that creates an acute awareness of the nymphs’ nudity – or, to put it the other way round, of them realising being watched and responding with an instinctive desire to withdraw from this gaze.

Sannazaro ends the *Arcadia* with an otherworldly scenario of a nymph under water, entirely different in tone from the one just discussed. In the twelfth prose of the *Arcadia* the narrator encounters a maiden who is again covered but not obscured, this time by her dress. Her ‘garment was of a cloth most subtly thin and so lustrous that, except that I saw it was soft, I would have said for certain that it was of crystal’ (‘la cui veste era di un drappo sottilissimo e sí rilucente che, se non che morbido il vedea, avrei per certo detto che di cristallo fusse’). Thus while the girl is dressed, her garments are utterly

62 Sannazaro, *Arcadia*, trans. Nash, prosa III, 43. ‘certe ninfe ignude, le quali dietro un tronco di castagno stavano quasi mezze nascose, ridendo di un montone che per intendere a rodere una ghirlanda di quercia che dinanzi agli occhi gli pendea, non si ricordava di pascere le erbe che dintorno gli stavano’. Sannazaro, *Arcadia*, ed. Erspamer, 76.

63 I agree with Melinda Cro that the scene of the escape cannot be reduced to ‘pastoral eroticism’, as the threat of violence is palpable in Sannazaro’s telling of the scene, see Cro M.A., “Ekphrasis and the Feminine in Sannazaro’s *Arcadia*”, *Romance Notes* 52, 1 (2012) 71–78, here 74.

64 Sannazaro, *Arcadia*, trans. Nash, prosa III, 43; Sannazaro, *Arcadia*, ed. Erspamer, 77.

transparent, which already points to her identity: 'Follow my steps,' she commands the narrator, 'because I am a nymph of this region' ('Seguita i passi miei, ch'io son ninfa di questo luogo').<sup>65</sup> The narrator is terrified, but she takes him by the hand and leads him straight into the river. It is a phantasmagorical journey they embark on, walking the river ground like a valley. They reach a cavern which is held up by pillars made of translucent glass and whose floor is covered by green tapestry.<sup>66</sup> A group of nymphs is assembled there, engaging in various pastimes: sifting gold, spinning it into thread, and weaving it with silk threads of diverse colours. The tapestries they produce show stories of nymphs, among them that of unfortunate Eurydice. Sincero, the narrator, is deeply moved by the story, but his guide quickly urges him to continue their journey. Passing lakes and the springs of several rivers, they descend deeper and deeper into a frightening underworld, eventually finding themselves right under the sea itself. As they reach the river Sebeto, the nymph eventually releases him, and Sincero emerges from the waters, leaving this otherworldly experience behind him.

The episode leads us deep into the subterranean realm, and not only into water, but under the bottom of the sea itself. Thus it may appear inconsistent with the theme of diaphanous fluidity so frequently associated with water, yet it nevertheless highlights a concern with translucence and visibility. The nymphs' underwater abode is supported by glass columns, an idea that is taken up by Garcilaso de la Vega, who almost singlehandedly introduced Italianate poetic style and imagery in early sixteenth century Spain, in his sonnet XI:

Hermosas ninfas, que en el río metidas,  
contentas habitáis en las moradas  
de relucientes piedras fabricadas  
y en columnas de vidrio sostenidas;

agora estéis labrando embebecidas,  
o tejiendo las telas delicadas;  
agora unas con otras apartadas,  
contándoos los amores y las vidas;

65 Sannazaro, *Arcadia*, trans. Nash, prosa XII, 135, with my changes. Sannazaro, *Arcadia*, ed. Erspamer, 214.

66 It is referred to as 'verdure', which is a pattern of leaves that was popular at the time, see Barnard M.E., *Garcilaso de la Vega and the Material Culture of Renaissance Europe* (Toronto: 2014) 14–35, here 17; Schmitz-von Ledebur K. (ed.), *Fäden der Macht. Tapisserien des 16. Jahrhunderts aus dem Kunsthistorischen Museum*, exh. cat., Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien (Vienna: 2015) 208–214.



dejad un rato la labor, alzando  
 vuestras rubias cabezas a mirarme.  
 y no os detendréis mucho según ando;

que o no podréis de lástima escucharme,  
 o convertido en agua aquí llorando,  
 podréis allá de espacio consolarme.

Slender nymphs who dwell within the river,  
 contentedly inhabiting those halls  
 that are constructed out of shining jewels  
 and underset by colonnades of crystal,

whether bowed over your work,  
 or toiling at the weaver's delicate art,  
 or whether sitting in little groups apart,  
 making loves and lives into a story,

for a moment set aside what you are doing  
 and raise your lovely heads to view my plight;  
 you won't spend long, for such is my present state

either for pity you will shrink from listening  
 or, when weeping turns me into water here,  
 there'll be time enough to comfort me down there.<sup>67</sup>

The description of the *moradas*, the nymphs' dwellings, is not to be taken as a metaphorical evocation of the craggy structure of underwater grottoes, as some commentators have argued, but clearly refers to a wondrous glass architecture.<sup>68</sup> Similarly the 'gran casa' of the wise Felicia, situated right between two irriguous rivers, to which three nymphs lead the lovesick party of shepherdesses and shepherds in the fourth book of Montemayor's *La Diana*, appears to be a glass construction: the capitals crowning its pillars 'daban de sí tan gran resplandor que parecían hechos de un finísimo cristal' ('were so

67 Vega Garcilaso de la, *Poesías castellanas completas*, ed. E.L. Rivers (Madrid: 1996), soneto XI; Vega Garcilaso de la, *Selected Poems*, ed. and trans. J. Dent-Young (Chicago, IL – London: 2009), with my changes.

68 Cf. Küpper J., "Love after Death in Garcilaso de la Vega", in Jussen B. – Targoff R. (eds.), *Love After Death: Concepts of Posthumous Love in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Berlin: 2015) 111–146, here 136. See for a contrary view Barnard, *Garcilaso de la Vega* 127.

resplendent that they appeared to be made of the finest crystal').<sup>69</sup> Thus the stress is on the diaphanous appearance, not on the poetic representation of nature. Nymphs are thus not only imagined in revealing garments, but their magically translucent abodes also seem to prefigure glass construction, the architectural marvel of the nineteenth century. The uniting theme is transparency, which informs the nymphs' style of clothing, their visibility under the water surface, as well as their underwater dwellings.

While the *Arcadia's* Sincero has to descend into the depths of the underworld to encounter nymphs, Garcilaso de la Vega inverts the movement and organises one of his eclogues around nymphs emerging from the waters. The idea that nymphs would dive up from the depths of the sea can be traced back to Homer. When Achilles mourns his friend Patroclus in book XVIII of Homer's *Iliad*, his mother Thetis hears his loud groans while she sits in the depths of the sea next to her old father, Nereus. Uttering a shrill cry herself in response to Achilles' wailing, the Nereids hurry to gather around her, showing their compassion by beating their breasts. The narrator takes the time to introduce them all individually:

There were Glaucē and Thaleia and Cymodoce, Nesaea and Speio and Thoë and ox-eyed Halië, and Cymothoë and Actaeä and Limnoreia, and Melite and Iaera and Amphithoe and Agave, Doto and Proto and Pherousa and Dynamene, and Dexamene and Amphinone and Callianeira, Doris and Pynope and glorious Galatea, Nemertes and Apseudes and Callianassa, and there were Clymene and Ianeira and Ianassa, Maera and Orithyia and fair-tressed Amatheia, and other Nereids that were in the deep of the sea.<sup>70</sup>

When Thetis decides to join Achilles on land to comfort him, the Nereids escort her: '[...] she left the cave, and the nymphs went with her weeping, and around them the waves of the sea were cloven asunder. And when they were come to the deep-soiled land of Troy they stepped forth upon the beach, one after the other [...].'<sup>71</sup> The magical moment of a group of nymphs emerging from the sea remains curiously unexploited by the narrator. There is no mention of

69 Montemayor, *La Diana* 256.

70 Homer, *Iliad* XVIII, 39–49. This catalogue did not become the canonical list of nymphs' names, despite being repeated in Boccaccio's *Genealogia deorum Gentilium* VII, 14, "De nymphis in generali".

71 Homer, *Iliad* XVIII, 65–68.

the nymphs' bodies, no description of their movement through the water, no rhetorical *evidentia* that would place the group before the reader's eye.

In Garcilaso's *Third Eclogue*, it is not the ocean, but the Tajo, the Iberian Peninsula's longest river that cuts across it to flow into the Atlantic in Portugal, that is home to the nymphs:

Con tanta mansedumbre el cristalino  
Tajo en aquella parte caminaba,  
que pudieran los ojos el camino  
determinar apenas que llevaba.  
Peinando sus cabellos de oro fino,  
una ninfa del agua do moraba  
la cabeza sacó, y el prado ameno  
vido de flores y de sombra lleno.

In that part of its course the crystalline  
Tajo moved so gently and so calmly  
the eye was scarcely able to determine  
in which direction it was smoothly flowing.  
Combing her hair of fine gold thread,  
a nymph from the stream that was her dwelling  
stuck out her head and saw the delightful mead,  
the flowers blooming and the abundant shade.<sup>72</sup>

This moment of surprise, that a nymph would suddenly pop out her head from a lazy stream, echoes a scene in the *Arcadia* in which Sannazaro's narrator evokes 'the lustful Satyrs who are wont to bound through the forests for half the night, waiting for their beloved Nymphs to come forth from the streams nearby' ('sogliono sovente i lascivi satiri per le selve la mezza notte saltare aspettando che dai vicini fiumi escano le amate ninfe').<sup>73</sup> This presupposes that nymphs are present in the rivers, concealed from view, and might emerge at any given point in time. This possibility of a chance encounter adds a sense of excitement, not only to *Arcadia*, but to the everyday world. In this regard, water takes on the meaning of an opaque cover, one that shields secret dwellings

72 Garcilaso de la Vega, *Poesías castellanas completas*, égloga III, 65–72; Vega Garcilaso de la, *Selected Poems*, ed. and trans. J. Dent-Young (Chicago, IL – London: 2009), with my changes.

73 Sannazaro, *Arcadia*, trans. Nash, *prosa* v, 58. Sannazaro, *Arcadia*, ed. Erspamer, 99.

from view. Yet it is permeable, permitting nymphs to emerge unexpectedly and as a pleasant surprise.

Garcilaso now intertwines both ideas from Sannazaro, yet creates a completely new scenario. First, the nymph dives down again – or rather, in his words, she lets herself sink to the ground ('y al fondo se dejó calar del río', v. 84) – to tell her sisters, who dwell at the bottom of the river,<sup>74</sup> about the beautiful meadow and to convince them to pack up their work and spend the afternoon on land. The descriptions of the diving and swimming nymphs are particularly evocative. Departing from Sannazaro, who had only mentioned the nymphs' swimming, Garcilaso elaborates on the animated, playful swimming strokes performed by the little group.<sup>75</sup> A white foot that eventually touches the wet grass of the shore stands metonymically for the white bodies that eventually emerge from the river.

El agua claro con lacivo juego  
nadando dividieron y cortaron,  
hasta que el blanco pie tocó mojado,  
saliendo de la arena, el verde prado. (v. 93–96)

sporting and leaping through the stream they went,  
cleaving and splitting the transparent water,  
until, after traversing the sandy shore,  
still dripping wet, the white foot trod the greensward.

This heightened sense of expectation that is created by staging nymphs as wondrous beings that may well be lurking under the water surface as one walks by has been brilliantly satirised by Lope de Vega. In sonnet x of his *Las rimas humanas y divinas de Tomé de Burquillos* (1634), he evokes a bizarre landscape with steep mountain cliffs from which icy meltwater precipitates into a river seamed by lush meadows. The river is inhabited by nymphs whose white breasts show through the water surface; in their translucent, shimmery white

74 The dependence of this passage on Sannazaro's *prosa* XII was already noted by Garcilaso's sixteenth century commentators, in particular El Brocense (1574) and Herrera (1580), see Gallego Morell A. (ed.), *Garcilaso de la Vega y sus comentaristas* (Granada: 1966) 555–556. The scene also finds an echo in Cervantes' second part of the *Don Quijote*, when Quijote refuses Sancho's report that he had seen Dulcinea sifting wheat. Surely her pastime, contends Quijote, will have been the same as what 'nuestro poeta' (i.e. Garcilaso) had described for the nymphs. Cervantes, *Don Quijote* II, VIII, 82–83.

75 Cf. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* v, 572, the description of Arethusa swimming.

they compete with the crystal clear water. They appear as 'sweet ships of love', quite different from the vessels that usually leave the shores of Spain:

Nadan en su cristal ninfas bizarras,  
compitiendo con él cándidos pechos,  
dulces naves de Amor, en más estrechos,  
que las que salen de españolas barras. (v. 5–8)

Yet the second tercet presents a surprisingly underwhelming report on how the lyrical "I" experienced this remarkable landscape:

Y en este monte y líquida laguna,  
para decir verdad, como hombre honrado,  
jamás me sucedió cosa ninguna. (v. 12–14)<sup>76</sup>

As per usual, biting satire was of course not able to dispose of the idea. Rather, it informs conventions of seeing and describing reality well into the twentieth century, and the theme reverberates in unforeseen contexts. In the nineteenth century, for instance, the city authorities of Madrid offered more than 880 washing spaces on the banks of the river Manzanares which could be used against a fee and which were open on all working days of the year. As the river had to be crossed in order to travel to La Mancha and Andalucía, virtually all of the many early tourists travelling through Spain had to pass the hundreds of women who tended to their washing and laid out the white pieces of laundry to dry on the river shore. As Carmen Sarasúa has pointed out, the view of the labouring women, to them, was picturesque and fit their bill of a 'romantic' Spain.<sup>77</sup> One of these tourists was Charles Davilliers, a French baron who visited Madrid in the 1860s. The river Manazares, he noted in his travelogue, despite regularly drying up during the summer months, 'a même ses Nâïades, simples *lavanderas*, robustes filles de la Galicie [...]'.<sup>78</sup>

76 Vega Lope de, *Rimas humanas y divinas del licenciado Tomé de Burguillos*, ed. J.M. Rozas – J. Cañas Murillo (Madrid: 2005) 140. 'In its cristal clear waters valient nymphs are swimming, / their white breasts competing with him, / sweet vessels of love, smaller than those / which sail from Spanish ports' – 'But on this mountain and in these waters, / to say the truth as an honourable man, / nothing ever happened to me'.

77 See Sarasúa C., "El oficio más molesto, más duro: el trabajo de las lavanderas en la España de los siglos XVIII al XX", *Historia Social* 45 (2003) 5–77, here 66.

78 Davilliers C., *L'Espagne, illustrée [...] par Gustave Doré* (Paris: 1874) 609.

With regard to the cognitive operations at work here, it is the combination of water, women with bare arms and feet, and the whiteness of the linens that informs the transformation of hard-working women into mythological beauties. The image is already prefigured in Sannazaro's *Arcadia*, where shepherdesses, who dress and behave well above their station, 'parading haughtily with soft pace, as if they had been Naiads or Napeans' ('con suave passo procedevano, sì come Naiade o Napee state fusseno'), are observed refreshing themselves at a clear spring: 'By pushing their trim sleeves back to the elbow they displayed all bare the whiteness of their arms, which added no little beauty to their tender and delicate hands' ('e retiratesi le schiette maniche insino al cubito, mostravano ignude le candidissime braccia, le quali non poca bellezza alle tenere e delicate mani sopraggiungevano').<sup>79</sup> Davilliers not only chooses to overwrite the workers' without doubt sunburnt arms with the whiteness of a literary nymph's delicate limbs, he also matter-of-factly presupposes that each river would 'have its nymphs'. Of course, French literature knows this trope well, be it in the pastoral tradition in the vein of Honoré d'Urfé, be it in occasional poetry, as for example Jean Racine's, who had the 'nymphes de la Seine' greet the new queen María Teresa de Austria (Marie-Thérèse d'Autriche) in an ode upon her nuptials with Louis XIV in 1660.<sup>80</sup> Apparently unbeknownst to Davilliers, the river Manzanares had of course been often evoked as being inhabited by nymphs. It was in particular Lope de Vega who kept returning to this idea in various genres throughout his long literary career. In his *Laurel de Apolo* (1630), Lope has the nymphs of the Manazares sing the praise of Spain's most notable poets.<sup>81</sup> And not to mention the first opera of the Iberian Peninsula, composed by Filippo Piccinini based on a libretto by Lope: it stages an allegory of the Manzanares ordering his nymphs to arrest Amor who had infected his cool empire with the burning venom of love, thus setting the (only

79 Sannazaro, *Arcadia*, ed. Nash, prosa IV, 50. Sannazaro, *Arcadia*, ed. Erspamer 88. The washerwoman, in Austrian German "Wäschermädel", was standardised as a type from very early on, see Kos W. (ed.), *Wiener Typen. Klischees und Wirklichkeit*, exh. cat., Wien Museum (Vienna: 2013) 323. The Spanish counterpart is the *lavandera*, while the French *grisette*, named after the colour of the simple cloth used for her dress, was in charge of a broader palette of activities, all related to the care of garments, including washing, sewing, lace-making, and, eventually, working in the big department stores. While they were all objects of male desire, it is those with washing as their primary remit that appear most closely related, explicitly or implicitly, to the figure of the nymph.

80 Racine Jean, *La Nympe de la Seine à la Reyne* (Paris, A. Courbé: 1660).

81 Vega Lope de, *Laurel de Apolo*, ed. Antonio Carreño (Madrid: 2007) V, 114–135.

fictionally) cristal clear waters aflame.<sup>82</sup> Thus Davilliers' rather pompous and faux-generous remark that, after all, the Manzanares now – i.e. in the moment of him passing the river – had its nymphs, is grossly ignorant towards Spanish literary and cultural history.

The idea that nymphs would inhabit river beds is still present in T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922). The beginning of the poem's third part, "The Fire Sermon", evokes a deserted river Thames, after summer has ended:

The river's tent is broken: the last fingers of leaf  
Clutch and sink into the wet bank. The wind  
Crosses the brown land, unheard. The nymphs are departed.  
Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song.  
The river bears no empty bottles, sandwich papers,  
Silk handkerchiefs, carboard boxes, cigarette ends  
Or other testimony of summer nights. The nymphs are departed.<sup>83</sup>

The seasonal setting, with bare trees and the usual clutter of summer nights spent outdoors long swept away, is countered by the decisive tone of the lyrical "I" which suggests that the nymphs have not only abandoned the river until a more commendable season returns, but that they have yielded to a prosaic urban modernity. Just like Astraea, the celestial virgin who was the last of the gods to abandon earth (Ov. Met. 1, 149f.), the nymphs have departed not only London, but the world.

## 5 Art Imitating Art

Nymphs do not only appear as living beings in narrative texts, but are also confronted, on the diegetic level or in the narrator's comments, with nymphs turned into artworks. This juxtaposition frequently points to the licences different medialities entail. The palace of the wise Felicia in Montemayor's

82 Vega Lope de, *La selva sin amor*, ed. M.G. Profeti (Firenze, 1999) 610–617: 'Quién eres tú, rapaz? Quién, que, insolente, / de tu veneno ardiente / inficionas el claro imperio mío? / Ninfas de mi ribera, un niño ciego / penetra, lice, vuestro centro frío, / y mi puro cristal convierte en fuego. / ¡Prendelde! Muera luego / quien viene a interrumpir vuestro reposo!' – For the motif of the river speaking to "his" nymphs, see also Sannazaro, *Arcadia*, Ecloga XI, 88–89: 'Ma tu, ben nato avventuroso fiume, / convoca le tue Ninfe al sacro fondo'.

83 Eliot T.S., *The Waste Land and Other Poems* (London: 1972) 173–179.

*La Diana* is not only adorned with pillars crowned by glass capitals, there is also a plaza in front of it, decked out in marble and white alabaster:

En medio della [i.e. de la plaza] había una fuente de mármol jaspeado, sobre cuatro muy grandes leones de bronce. En medio de la fuente, estaba una columna de jaspe, sobre la cual cuatro ninfas de mármol blanco tenían sus asientos; los brazos tenían alzados en alto, y en las manos sendos vasos, hechos a la romana, de los cuales, por unas bocas de leones que en ellos había, echaban agua.<sup>84</sup>

The description of the fountain does not betray whether the four marble nymphs seated at the center for the fountain are dressed or not. Inside the palace, however, another fountain is described in no uncertain terms:

[...] estaban cuatro laureles de oro, esmaltados de verde, tan naturales que los del campo no lo eran más; y junto a ellos, una pequeña fuente, toda de fina plata, en medio de la cual estaba una ninfa de oro que por los hermosos pechos una agua muy clara echaba.<sup>85</sup>

As we have seen above, the revelatory function of nymphs' dress is focused on the limbs, typically offering glimpses of arms, feet, or legs. Apart from the 'pechos' in Lope's satirical sonnet, breasts are usually off limits in narrative. When describing statues, however, 'beautiful breasts' can be the single feature mentioned at all. The extensive architectural descriptions in *La Diana* are clearly reminiscent of Francesco Colonna's *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, which is as a whole the search for a nymph, Poliphilo's beloved Polia.<sup>86</sup> In particular there is a nymph fountain that, while not being designed in a fashion similar to

84 Montemayor, *La Diana* IV, 258–259: 'In the middle of the plaza there was a fountain made of specked marble standing on four very big bronze lions. In the middle of the fountain, there was a column made of black jasper on top of which four white marble nymphs were seated. Their arms were raised, and in their hands they held massive goblets, made in the Roman style and fitted with lion's mouths, from which they poured water'.

85 Montemayor, *La Diana* IV, 275: 'There were four laurel trees made of gold and green enamel that looked more natural than the nature of the countryside. And next to them was a small spring made of fine silver, in the midst of which was a golden nymph effusing perfectly clear water from her beautiful breasts'.

86 On Warburg's repeated study of the *Hypnerotomachia*, for the first time as early as 1889, and the catalogue of criteria for the identification of nymph figures apparently derived from it – prominently among them skirted garments and wind-blown hair –, see Oettinger A., "Aby Warburg's Nymph and the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*: An Episode in



those in Montemayor, fulfills the same function. Poliphilo enters an octagonal building and finds ‘an elegant carving of a nymph’:

This beautiful nymph lay sleeping comfortably in an outspread drapery, part of which was beautifully wadded and folded to form a pillow for her head, while another part was made into a convenient covering for that which should remain concealed. She lay on her right side, with the lower arm bent and its open hand beneath her cheek, lazily supporting her head. The other arm was free and extended along her left side with its hand open halfway down her plump thigh. The nipples of her small breasts were like a virgin's, and from them spurted streams of water, cold from the right-hand one and hot from the left.<sup>87</sup>

There are parts of her body that need to be concealed, and the required drapery is artfully provided, but her breasts are on view, and together with her arms and her plump thigh they are the only one of her features that figure in the description – of a headless creature.<sup>88</sup> Her most remarkable feature is the prefiguration of hot-water plumbing, again positioning the nymph as the forbear of technological innovation. Regrettably, this construction does not feature in the related illustration, which shows a satyr removing a cloth to reveal the seemingly sleeping nymph. With all the paraphernalia of a fountain gone, it is impossible to tell whether the image represents a living or an artificial nymph [Fig. 4.4]. A hint could be that all the other nymphs the narrator interacts with (and also spies on) are shown fully dressed – in nymphs' dress, of course.

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the Afterlife of a Renaissance Romance”, *Explorations in Renaissance Culture* 32, 2 (2006) 225–246.

- 87 Colonna Francesco, *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili. The Strife of Love in a Dream*, trans. J. Godwin (London: 1999) 71. Cf. Titian's *Diana and Callisto* at the Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien, where the scene of Diana's discovery of Callisto's pregnancy takes place not in front of a natural spring, but of an elaborate Renaissance fountain. On top is a female figure in loose garments who spills water from both her hands and both her breasts. Cf. <https://www.khm.at/objektdb/detail/1953/> (04.06.2017). – The fascination of nymphal plumbing cannot be overestimated. By 1874, still only 10.3 percent of households in London had plumbing in their houses that provided constant water supply. Hot-water pipes were introduced to middle-class houses only in the 1870s, see Flanders J., *The Victorian House. Domestic Life from Childbirth to Deathbed* (London: 2003) 92, 287.
- 88 Cf. on the role of the gaze in the *Hypnerotomachia* Arnold R., “Ansichten und Einsichten – die Rolle der visuellen Perzeption in der *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* (1499)”, *Wolfenbütteler Renaissance-Mitteilungen* 35 (2014) 3–20.

A different case of art imitating art can be found in Miguel de Cervantes' pastoral novel *La Galatea* (1585), which marked his first venture on the literary stage. There, the imagery of the nymph is taken up, yet transformed in two ways: The *pastora* Galatea, who carries a nymphs' name<sup>89</sup> and is – just like Montemayor's Diana – the object of two shepherds' desire (Elicio and Erastro), seeks to get away from her suitors and tells Elicio of her plan to spend her siesta at the bank of a little river with her friend Florisa, to which Elicio replies that there is nowhere for her to go on her own as his thoughts would always be with her.

When Galatea joins Florisa at the arroyo de las Palmas, both having allowed their flocks to roam freely and to graze on the green grass, 'they determined, invited by the clearness of the water of a stream flowing by, to wash their beautiful faces' ('convidadas de la claridad del agua de un arroyo que allí corría, determinaron de lavarse los hermosos rostros').<sup>90</sup> Both shepherdesses are described along the overarching theme of the *Galatea*, *menosprecio de corte y alabanza de aldea* – contempt for the extravagant customs of the cities and courts and praise of rural simplicity. Florisa's and Galatea's beauty is addressed as natural, as being in stark contrast to the artificial beauty courtly ladies seek to achieve through make-up and extravagant get-ups. These fashions are qualified as torment: 'to enhance their beauty, they had no need of the vain and irksome arts whereby those ladies in great cities who think themselves most beautiful, torture theirs. They remained as beautiful after washing as before, save that, through having rubbed their faces with their hands, their cheeks remained aflame and blushing-red, so that an indescribable beauty made them yet more fair'.<sup>91</sup>

Not only the proximity to the river, but also their hairstyle gives them the air of nymphs: 'they began to gather various flowers from the green meadow to make each a garland to bind up the disordered tresses that flowed freely over their shoulders' ('[c]omenzaron luego a coger diversas flores del verde prado

89 Cf. Czaplá B., "Die Wandlung der Nereide Galatea von einer Kokotte zur Heiligen oder die Usurpation eines griechischen Mythos durch den Petrarkismus", *Antike und Abendland* 52 (2006) 95–116.

90 Cervantes Miguel de, *La Galatea*, ed. F. López Estrada – T. López García-Berdoy (Madrid: 42011) 209.

91 '[...] pues no era menester para acrecentarles hermosura el vano y enfadoso artificio con que los suyos martirizan las damas que en las grandes ciudades se tienen por más hermosas. Tan hermosas quedaron después de lavadas como antes lo estaban, excepto que por haber llegado las manos con movimiento al rostro, quedaron sus mejillas encendidas y sonroeadas, de modo que un no sé qué de hermosura les acrescentaba'. Cervantes, *La Galatea* 209.

con intención de hacer sendas guirnalda con que recoger los desornados cabellos que sueltos por las espaldas traían').<sup>92</sup> While the washing of their faces is somewhat anti-climactic in comparison with Garcilaso's swimming nymphs that step on shore with naked white feet and that wring out their golden hair as soon as they have reached the meadow, the description of Galatea's beauty does not seem to be forceful enough without reference to nudity – and art: 'in Galatea we see united the three Graces whom the Greeks of old depicted naked to show (amongst other purposes) that they were mistresses of beauty' ('[...] Galatea, en quien se vieron juntas las tres Gracias, a quien los antiguos griegos pintaban desnudas por mostrar, entre otros efectos, que eran señoras de la belleza').<sup>93</sup>

While Galatea's beauty could simply have been established by describing it, the narrator resorts to evoking the medium of painting and the idealised Graces of antiquity to underwrite Galatea's exceptional beauty. This twice mediated evocation of beauty – asserted by the narration of the face-washing and confirmed by the comparison with antique depictions of nude deities – is crucial with regard to the difference between the verbal and the pictorial discourse about nymphs. The bodies of narrated nymphs are evoked through references to exposed or transparently covered body parts – a wet foot, a white arm, a bent neck, freely flowing locks. It is the pleasures of the imagination that are incited by these fragmentary references. But the medium of painting is referenced in the narrative text as a sort of voucher, indicating that the shepherdesses' beauty is not only outstanding, but conforms with classical standards. What is more, by evoking the three Graces as represented in the visual medium, the narration also points to something the text cannot do: putting the very image before the eyes of a beholder.

To conclude, let us take a look at a painting that is hardly ever discussed in connection with nymphs or Arcadia: *L'enseigne de Gersaint* by Jean-Antoine Watteau, now in Charlottenburg castle in Berlin [Fig. 2.3]. The painting has received intense critical attention because of the portrait of Louis XIV that is shown as being packed up in the art dealer's store, thus standing for the end of an era. But what is of interest to us is the two connoisseurs in the background. The lady to the left appears to inspect the foliage in the painting, using her lorgnon to study the details. The gentleman to the right, in contrast, is on his knees for a better view. With the energy of a classical nymph he pushes forward, lorgnon in hand, and studies the group of nymphs in the nude. Arcadia

92 Cervantes, *La Galatea* 209.

93 Ibidem.



FIGURE 2.3 Antoine Watteau, *The Shop Sign* (1720). Oil on canvas, 163 × 308 cm. Charlottenburg castle, Stiftung Preussische Schlösser und Gärten Berlin-Brandenburg, Berlin.

is once again there for our viewing pleasure, and our own gaze is this time not mirrored, but transported into the image in a striking *mise en abyme*.

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# Salmacis, Hermaphrodite, and the Inversion of Gender: Allegorical Interpretations and Pictorial Representations of an Ovidian Myth, ca. 1300–1770

Karl Enenkel

## Introduction: The Ovidian Myth and Its Gender Narrative

Although from antiquity on, the concept of the nymph has included a great variety of minor deities connected with different local cults and various habitats, all nymphs seem to have in common that they were imagined as young, beautiful, gracious girls, and that they were thought to behave in a female and feminine way; if attached to Diana, they were believed to act as virgins. The myth of Salmacis, however, refers to a different kind of nymph: a nymph that excels in the inversion of “normal” gendered behaviour, and that was thought to have caused the disturbing bodily phenomenon of Hermaphroditism.<sup>1</sup>

The myth as it was depicted and interpreted in the early modern period is entirely based on a literary invention by Ovid, in his *Metamorphoses* (IV, 288–388).<sup>2</sup> Ovid’s highly imaginative story, however, does not give an account

1 On the physical and medical phenomenon of Hermaphroditism in Greco-Roman antiquity and in the Renaissance (which in itself will not be the topic of this contribution) cf., *inter alia*, Brisson L., *Sexual Ambivalence: Androgyny and Hermaphroditism in Graeco-Roman Antiquity*, transl. J. Lloyd (Berkeley, California U.P.: 2002; originally French, Paris: 1999); Long K.P., *Hermaphrodites in Renaissance Europe* (Aldershot: 2006); Duval Jacques, *Des Hermaphrodites* [...] (Rouen, David Geuffroy: 1612).

2 Except for Ovid’s narrative in his *Metamorphoses*, there are no Greek or Latin sources from antiquity that provide other substantial versions of the myth. The Greek historian Diodorus Siculus only briefly mentioned the love of Salmacis for Hermaphroditus in his *Bibliotheca* IV, 6. But this had no effect on the pictorial representations. Heinze Th., “Hermaphroditos”, in *Der neue Pauly* 5 (1999), col. 418, states: ‘Einzig erhaltene mythische Erzählung [...] is Ov. Met. 4, 274–388’. Furthermore, Heinze seems to suggest that Ovid’s account may go back to a narrative ‘orientalischer Herkunft’. This, however, remains very speculative. Anyway, we do not have a single piece of evidence of this. Here I use *inventio* primarily as a neutral t.t. of rhetoric and poetica: this means that it was Ovid who ‘designed’ and shaped the story as a piece of literature; in the case of the Salmacis narrative, it implies that in all probability, he invented the great majority of the details.

of the actual religious rites of the Greek cult of bisexual Aphroditus; this cult had its roots in Asia Minor or Cyprus, and it was transferred to other places, such as Athens, from the 4th century BC on. In this cult Ἀφρόδιτος was venerated in the form of bisexual statues: its upper part resembled a beautiful woman dressed in fine clothes; its lower part, however, was naked and showed male genitals with an erection.<sup>3</sup> There may have been a cult of Aphroditus or Hermaphroditus in Halicarnassus in Asia Minor (today Bodrum, in Turkey); the Roman architect Vitruvius (second half of the 1st century BC) mentioned a temple of Aphrodite and Hermes in the surrounding area of Halicarnassus,<sup>4</sup> but it is not clear whether that was the place where Hermaphroditus was venerated, and “Vitruvius’s temple” could not be identified.<sup>5</sup> Salmacis, which was a famous bath and fountain in the surrounding area of Halicarnassus, may have had a cult too.<sup>6</sup> Recently, in the harbour of Bodrum a Greek inscription was found that points to the existence of the local cult in Hellenistic times.<sup>7</sup>

However, in Ovid’s *inventio* religious veneration is of lesser importance: his story primarily represents a playful, literary, charming, and humorous aetiology of the transvestite demigod Hermaphroditus, in the form of an erotic virtuoso narrative in which the inversion of ‘normal’ gendered behaviour is of

3 Cf. Hoheisel K., art. “Hermaphroditos”, in *Realenzyklopädie für Antike und Christentum* 14 (1988) 650–682; Ajootian A., art. “Hermaphroditus”, in *LIMC* V, 1, 268–285; V, 2, 190–198; Hermann P., “Hermaphroditos”, in Roscher vol. 1, 2, cols. 2314–2342; Delcourt M., *Hermaphrodite. Myths and Rites of the Bisexual Figure in Classical Antiquity* (trans. J. Nicholson) (London: 1961; originally in French, published in 1956 with the title *Hermaphrodite. Mythes et rites de la bisexualité dans l’Antiquité classique*); eadem, “Hermaphroditea. Recherches sur l’être double promoteur de fertilité dans le monde classique”, in *Latomus* 86 (1966). Andrea Raehs deals with the pictorial and religious representations of Hermaphrodite in antiquity and the Renaissance, but unfortunately her study is not specific enough and suffers from numerous misunderstandings and lacunae. Cf. Raehs A., *Zur Ikonographie des Hermaphroditen. Begriff und Problem von Hermaphroditismus und Androgynie in der Kunst* (Frankfurt a. M. et alii: 1990). For the Renaissance, the number of pictorial representations she found is surprisingly small (cf. *ibidem* 65–75).

4 *De architectura* II, 8, 11–12.

5 Cf. Heinze, “Hermaphroditos” 418.

6 Salmacis, the bath and fountain situated in the surroundings of Halicarnassus, was famous for its crystal-clear water; in the first century BC, however, there was a rumour that the water of the bath might cause venereal diseases. However, the architect Vitruvius praised the quality of Salmacis’s water and tried to show that the negative rumours were pointless (*De architectura* II, 8, 11). Cf. Binder C., “Salmakis”, in *Der Neue Pauly*, vol. x (2001), cols. 1259–1260; Hermann, “Hermaphroditos”, cols. 2317–2319.

7 Cf. Isager S. – Pedersen P. (eds.), *The Salmakis Inscription and Hellenistic Halkarnassos* (U.P. of Southern Denmark: 2004).

pivotal importance. 'Normal' gendered behaviour I define in a historical and sociological sense, as gendered behaviour that was generally accepted in the historical periods under discussion, among the social groups that represent the audience or recipients of the story. Ovid's narrative is subtly structured and consists of 15 segments or parts in which the poet elaborates on various inversions of 'normal' gendered behavior.

In the first three parts, the protagonists basically stay within their "proper" gender roles. Hermaphroditus acts like a typical man: at the beginning of his adulthood he leaves his fatherland to discover the world (parts 1–2; *Metamorphoses* IV, 292 ff.). Salmacis is depicted as a typical woman (part 3): she takes care of her beauty, stays at her place (i.e. the fountain), and abhors physical labour (302–314); she combs her hair frequently ('saepe', 311), wears a seductive transparent robe, and always looks into the mirror to see what best becomes her (312–313); furthermore, she picks flowers (314), obviously in order to adorn her beauty. Ovid also adds the telling detail that she uses the pool as a mirror.

When Salmacis meets Hermaphroditus, all of a sudden she changes her gendered behaviour: in part 4 she displays a *male gaze*, a gaze that wants to possess what it sees ('puerum vidit visumque optavit habere', 316). Furthermore, in a male manner she proposes to Hermaphroditus, by exploiting the power of formal Roman rhetoric in order to impose her will on him (part 5, 320–328). In his reaction, in the next segment (part 6), Hermaphroditus displays female behaviour: unable to say anything, he only blushes (329 ff.). Ovid's description lingers erotically on Hermaphroditus's blush (333).<sup>8</sup> Then the nymph again displays male behaviour: she throws her arms 'around the snowy neck' of the boy and tries to kiss him (part 7, 334–335). Like a girl, the boy is ashamed and upset, and apparently afraid of losing his virginity: he says, 'Stop it, or I will leave' (part 8; 336). In reaction, Salmacis plays a trick (part 9). She promises to leave so that the boy may freely use the fountain; however, she actually hides behind a thicket (337–340).

In the next part (10), Ovid describes a scene of erotic voyeurism, but with inverse gender roles. The naive boy throws aside his clothes (345); interestingly, Ovid gives them a feminine touch – they are soft and thin ('mollia').<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, the nymph, like a male, gazes at Hermaphroditus's nude body, and she loses control (part 11; 346–351). Then the boy jumps into the water

8 Which seemed more beautiful because of the contrasting ivory colour of his skin; white skin is another marker of the female from antiquity to the Renaissance (332).

9 In this sense, resembling the feminine, translucent clothes of the nymph ('perlucenti amictu', 313).

and swims (part 12; 352–355): Salmacis gazes lustfully at his naked body, which shines through the crystal-clear water; his body reminds her of ‘ivory’ or ‘white lilies’; the white colour was a traditional quality of female beauty (354–355). In the following part (13), the nymph’s behaviour becomes even more male: she shouts, ‘He is mine’ and (a) casts off her clothes, (b) jumps right into the middle of the pool (356–357), (c) catches the male as if he were prey, and (d) embraces, touches, and kisses him forcefully, and actually tries to rape him (358–367). When the nymph registers that she is not succeeding, she prays to the gods to unite them forever (part 14). In the last part (15), the gods hear her prayer: Salmacis’s and Hermaphroditus’s bodies and faces merge into one, and the result is the well-known hermaphrodite (370–379).

### Ovid’s Gender Narrative and its Allegorical Interpretations, ca. 1300–1700

Ovid’s narrative clearly has an erotic bias and is focused on a subtle play on the traditional gender roles in sexual behaviour. It is interesting to look at what artists and intellectuals in the 16th to 18th centuries made of this, in light of the very restrictive sexuality of Christian culture. Christian religion reduced sexual practices to a minimum: sex was allowed only between husband and wife, only for the purpose of procreation, only to a certain degree that excluded a lot of excitement and lust, and only in certain positions that were regarded as proper for procreation.<sup>10</sup> Sexual practices outside these narrow borders were considered to be venial or even mortal sins. If one takes this into account, Ovid’s imaginative narrative, if taken literally, could have been regarded as deeply sinful. Sometimes the transmitted images show traces of censorship, such as with the woodcut by Giovanni Antonio Rusconi in a copy of Dolce’s Italian version of the *Metamorphoses*,<sup>11</sup> in which the naked bodies of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus are made black, or Virgil Solis’s woodcut in

10 Enenkel K.A.E., “Neo-Latin Erotic and Pornographic Literature (c. 1400–1700)”, in Ford Ph. – Bloemendal J. – Fantazzi Ch. (eds.), *Brill’s Encyclopaedia of the Neo-Latin World* (Leiden-Boston: 2014), Macropaedia 487–501.

11 It is a copy of the 2nd edition which had appeared in 1553: *Le Trasformationi di M. Lodovico Dolce di novo ristampate e da lui ricorrette et in diversi luoghi ampliate con la tavola delle favole* (Venice, Gabriel Giolito de’ Ferrari: 1553) 90. For the image cf. <http://www.iconos.it/le-metamorfose-di-ovidio/libro-iv/ermafroditto-e-salmace/immagini/20-ermafroditto-e-salmace/>; cf. Anna Gentili’s remark, *ibidem*: ‘L’illustrazione di Ermafroditto e Salmace è parzialmente coperta da inchiostro, con evidente intento di censura’. For Rusconi’s woodcut, cf. Cieri V. (ed.), *Immagini degli dei. Mitologia e collezionismo fra ‘500 e ‘600*

an exemplar of Reusner's *Picta poesis Ovidiana*, owned by the Jesuit college of Munich [Fig. 3.1].<sup>12</sup> However, from late antiquity on, a long tradition of allegorical reading of pagan myths existed, and was actually much used as an intellectual method in order to interpret such works as Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.<sup>13</sup>

### Medieval Allegorical Interpretations

A number of 14th-century interpretations – such as the ones by “Albericus” (or the Third Vatican Mythographer), a scholastic philosopher from England;<sup>14</sup> by the grammarian, poet, and lecturer at the university of Bologna Giovanni del Virgilio (born before 1300, died after 1327);<sup>15</sup> and by Giovanni dei Bonsignori

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(Milan: 1996) 290–291; Guthmüller B., *Mito, poesia, arte. Saggi sulla tradizione ovidiana nel Rinascimento* (Rome: 1997) 251–274.

- 12 *Picta poesis Ovidiana* (Frankfurt a.M., Sigmund Feyerabend: 1580), “De Hermaphrodito”, fol. 43v; copy of the Jesuit college of Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek Res/ A.lat.a 1327; <http://bildsuche.digitale-sammlungen.de/index.html?c=viewer&bandnummer=bsb00027986&pimage=90&v=100&nav=&l=de>. In the same copy, there are more traces of censorship: for example, on fol. 40v the image of Mars making love to Venus is crossed out; on fol. 40r, the naked breasts of Thisbe are made invisible; and so on.
- 13 Cf., inter alia, Levine R., “Exploiting Ovid. Medieval Allegorizations of the *Metamorphoses*”, *Medioevo Romano* 14 (1989) 197–213.
- 14 Mythographus tertius, ed. G.H. Bode (1834) IX, 2, 25–40.
- 15 Giovanni del Virgilio wrote two commentaries on Ovid's *Metamorphoses*: the *Esposizioni* in the vernacular, and the *Allegorie* in Latin. Both commentaries were transmitted in a large number of manuscripts: cf. Ghisalberti F., “Giovanni del Virgilio espositore delle ‘Metamorfosi’”, *Giornale dantesco* 34 (1933) 1–110; Coulson F.T., “A Checklist of Newly Identified Manuscripts of the *Allegoriae* of Giovanni del Virgilio”, *Studi Medievali* 37 (1996) 443–453. The Latin *Allegorie* provided each single myth with a prose and a verse explanation. For Giovanni del Virgilio's method as a commentator of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* cf. Ghisalberti, “Giovanni del Virgilio espositore delle ‘Metamorfosi’”; Marchesi C., “Le allegorie ovidiane di Giovanni del Virgilio”, *Studi Romanzi* 6 (1909) 85–135; Rotondi G., “I versi delle allegorie ovidiane di Giovanni del Virgilio”, *Rendiconti del Reale Istituto Lombardo di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti* 71 (1938) 408–416; and MacKinley K.L., *Reading the Ovidian Heroine. ‘Metamorphoses’ Commentaries 1100–1610* (Leiden-Boston: 2001) 96–105. For Giovanni del Virgilio's method as a grammarian, cf. Kristeller P.O., “Un ‘ars dictaminis’ di Giovanni del Virgilio”, *Italia medioevale e umanistica* 4 (1961) 181–200; and Alessio C., “I trattati grammaticali di Giovanni del Virgilio”, *Italia medioevale e umanistica* 24 (1981) 159–212. In his comment on Ovid, Giovanni del Virgilio was influenced by the French interpreters Arnolfo d'Orléans and Giovanni di Garlandia (*Integumenta Ovidii*). For Giovanni del Virgilio's biography cf. Pasquini E., art. “Del Virgilio Giovanni”, in *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani* 38 (1990).

(first half of the 14th century) – understood Hermaphroditus as indulgence in wanton, inappropriate, irrational, or rhetorical speech which could be considered either simply light-minded and superficial, or idle, vicious, and sinful. Albericus called this ‘sermonis lascivitas’, Giovanni del Virgilio, in his *Allegorie librorum Ovidii Metamorphoseos* (written 1322–1323), ‘sermo vagus’. Giovanni dei Bonsignori was a bit milder.<sup>16</sup> According to Giovanni del Virgilio, ‘sermo vagus’ came into existence when ‘sermo’ became united with boundless lust, ‘voluptas’; i.e. when the human *ratio* became overpowered by *voluptas*, the central emotion connected with vanity.<sup>17</sup> Such allegorical interpretations of Ovid were part of Giovanni del Virgilio’s educational programme at the university of Bologna around 1320.<sup>18</sup>

Albericus directed his remarks specifically against the use of the *art of rhetoric*.<sup>19</sup> In his interpretation he contrasts rhetoric and philosophy: for him, philosophy represents the male principle and the ‘truth’ (‘veritas’), and rhetoric the female principle and vanity (‘vanitas’). He was convinced that rhetorical speech would never bring to the fore truth and wisdom (‘sapientia’, ‘sophia’), but only make them obscure. Albericus despised rhetoric, especially when it departed from the truth and when he considered it ‘superfluous’ – with respect to the argument. Albericus’s allegorical explanations were still used in the 15th and 16th centuries. In 1520 they were printed in Paris by Jean de Marnef with the title *Allegoriae poeticae*.<sup>20</sup> Albericus’s interpretation was also repeated by Boccaccio in his *Genealogia deorum gentilium*, written in the middle of the

16 Giovanni dei Bonsignori, allegorical interpretation added to his Italian translation of the *Metamorphoses*: *Ovidio Methamorphoseos vulgare* (Venice, Zoane Rosso Vercellese: 1493), ad lib. iv, cap. 17: ‘Per Salmace potremo intendere quando lhuomo hane nel caldo pensier i boca’ – ‘We can understand Salmacis as the behaviour when a man has his heart on his tongue’.

17 Cf. *Allegorie librorum Ovidii Metamorphoseos*, ad iv, 13.

18 Cf. MacKinley, *Reading the Ovidian Heroine* 96–97.

19 Albericus/ Mythographus tertius, ed. G.H. Bode, in *Scriptores rerum mythicarum Latini tres Romae nuper reperti* (Celle: 1834), 9,2,25–40: ‘Hermaphroditos autem dicimus homines utriusque sexus, quos adrogenos [sic] nuncupamus [...]. Hermaphroditus autem significat quandam sermonis lascivitatem, quia plerumque, neglecta veritatis ratione, superfluum sermonis ornatus requiritur. Hinc est, quod Sophiam legimus Mercurio nubere noluisse. Licet enim sermo magnum sit rationalis creaturae ornamentum, sapientia tamen superfluum verborum ornatum respuit; non quod facundiae iungi refugiat, sed immoderatae verborum misceri non consentit’.

20 Cf. Albericus, *Allegoriae poeticae seu de veritate ac expositione poeticarum fabularum libri quattuor Alberico Londonensi authore nusquam antea impressi* (Paris, Jean de Marnef: 1520; facsimile reprint New York: London: 1976); the interpretation of Hermaphroditus is there, on fol. XXXIIIr (there, Hermaphroditus is called ‘Hermofroditos’).

14th century. Boccaccio, however, understood the myth as a warning against 'superfluous' speech in general, not so much against rhetoric in particular. It is directed against persons who are too talkative and 'say more than would be necessary (or useful)' ('lascivientem preter oportunitatem [...] sermonem'). Boccaccio regarded this kind of talkativeness as female; furthermore, he attributed to it a certain 'weakness of words' ('verborum mollicie'), which he associated with female speech as well:

Hermophroditum (sic) ex Mercurio et Venere genitum vult Albericus lascivientem preter oportunitatem esse sermonem, qui, cum virilis esse debeat, nimia verborum mollicie videtur effeminatus.

Albericus wants Hermophroditus (sic), born of Mercury and Venus, to represent wanton and superfluous speech; whereas speech ought to be manly, because of its excessive tenderness it seems to have become effeminate.<sup>21</sup>

However, Boccaccio was charmed by another, more historicising allegorical interpretation: he maintained that the Salmacis myth represented the process of civilisation, as it took place in Asia Minor, in the area around Halicarnassus. He invented the story of 'Arcas, a certain Greek colonist who came from Arcadia'. Arcas (which in fact means 'the man from Arcadia [in central Greece]') had the idea of building a tavern next to the fountain of Salmacis, which turned out to be a huge success. The barbarous mountain people got used to coming down to the fountain to get a good meal and sweet water, and after a while they became civilised:

[...] factum est, ut tam aque delectatione quam cibi oportunitate non nunquam barbari immanes descenderent in tabernam et consuetudine paulatim barbariem ponere et Grecorum mollioribus moribus atque humanioribus adherere inciperent, donec ex ferocissimis mites viderentur effecti. Et quoniam mansuetudo respectu feritatis videatur feminea, dictum est, ut qui illo uterentur fonte, effeminarentur.<sup>22</sup>

21 Boccaccio, *Genealogy of the Pagan Gods*, ed. and transl. by J. Solomon, vol. 1 (Cambridge, Mass.: 2011) (The I Tatti Renaissance Library 46) 376–377. Transl. by Solomon (with adaptations).

22 Ibidem 280–381 (transl. by Solomon): 'it happened that sometimes the savage barbarians would come down to the tavern, as much because of their liking for the water as the opportunity to obtain a meal, and little by little they put aside their barbarian qualities and

Boccaccio's *Genealogia* was readily available also in the 15th and 16th centuries, in manuscripts and printed books, and in Latin and various vernacular translations. Thus, readers other than Latin humanists and scholars also had access to his interpretation of the Salmacis myth – for example, in an Italian version which appeared in 1585 in Venice:

[...] avvenne, che spesse volte que Barbari fieri mossi non tanto dal bisogno de cibi, come dalla diletatione dell'acqua, entravano in quella taverna, et a poco a poco venivano a metter giu per la conuersatione quella Barberica fierrezza. Così incominciandosi ad accostare a i confini de i Greci piu molli, et piu humoni; in breve tempo di fierissimi parvero esser divenuti benigni. La onde perchè la mansuetudine (rispetto alla ferocità) par femina: fu detto che quelli che entravano in quel fiume s'effeminassero.<sup>23</sup>

The Benedictine monk Pierre Besuire (ca. 1290–1362), in his *Ovidius moralizatus* – i.e. the 15th book of his *Reductorium morale* (ca. 1340),<sup>24</sup> which also was transmitted independently – interpreted Hermaphroditus as Christ, who left his heavenly fatherland to visit the world,<sup>25</sup> and who descended into

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began to adhere to the more civilised and refined customs of the Greeks until the most ferocious people seemed to have been made gentle. And since their mildness seemed womanly in comparison to their savagery, it was said that those who used that spring had become effeminate'.

- 23 Italian translation of the above-quoted passage of the *Genealogia*, printed in 1585: *Della Genealogia degli Dei, edizione dedicata al serenissimo Guglielmo Gonzaga, Duca di Mantova e di Montefeltro* (Venice, Compagnia degli Uniti: 1585) 52.
- 24 *Reductorium morale, liber XV, cap. II–XV, "Ovidius moralizatus". Naar de Parijse druk van 1509 uitgegeven door het Instituut voor Latijn der Rijksuniversiteit Utrecht* (Utrecht: 1962). For Besuire's allegorising explanation cf. Moss A., *Ovid in Renaissance France: A Survey of the Latin Editions and Commentaries Printed in France Before 1600* (London: 1982) 23–26; eadem (ed.), *Latin Commentaries on Ovid from the Renaissance. Selected, introduced and translated by A. Moss* (Signal Mountain, TN: 1998) 61–101; Cf. Hexter R.J., "The *Allegoriae* of Pierre Besuire: Interpretation and the *Reductorium Morale*", *Allegorica* 10 (1989) 51–85; and Michel P., "Vel dic quod Phebus significat dyabolum. Zur Ovid-Auslegung des Petrus Berchorius", in Weder H. et al. (eds.), *Sinnvermittlung. Studien zur Geschichte von Exegese und Hermeneutik I* (Zurich et al.: 2000) 293–353.
- 25 Berchorius Petrus, *Metamorphosis Ovidiana moraliter a Magistro Thoma Walley's Anglico de professione praedicatorum sub sanctissimo patre Dominico explanata* [...] (Paris, Badius Ascensius: 1509), fols. 39r–40r (ad lib. iv, fab. 8): 'Iste Hermophroditus [...] filius Mercurii potest figurare dei filium super omnia speciosum, qui a principio propriam patriam, id est paradisum, dimittere decrevit et ad aliena loca, scilicet ad mundum, se transferre et ibi



the virgin, i.e. the fountain of compassion, and united his godly spirit with the human soul.<sup>26</sup> Besuire took Salmacis to be the soul of the true believer, longing to unite with the Lord,<sup>27</sup> but also to be the lazy nature of man.<sup>28</sup> Giovanni dei Bonsignori's commented Italian Ovid was available in the 14th and 15th centuries in manuscripts, and it was printed in the 15th and 16th centuries, including in 1493 in Venice.<sup>29</sup> In Dei Bonsignori's Ovid, each Ovidian myth ('favola') was followed by an allegorical interpretation, introduced by such formulas as: 'and this is the end of story x. Therefore, let's have a look on the allegorical interpretations [...]'.<sup>30</sup> Giovanni dei Bonsignori interpreted Hermaphroditus as 'man and woman when they are caught in sinful sexual practices'.<sup>31</sup> Similarly, in the important *Ovide moralisé* (ca. 1317–1328), Salmacis was allegorically taken as the personification of lust and sensual seduction (a kind of parallel to Eve), and Caria in Asia Minor as the land of worldly temptation.<sup>32</sup> Salmacis was thought to represent 'feminine sin and seduction' and is 'blamed for perverting men away from the path of virtue'.<sup>33</sup>

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in aqua se lavare [...] – 'This Hermaphroditus [sic], the son of Mercury, may symbolise God's son, whose beauty is unsurpassed, and who in the beginning decided to leave his heavenly fatherland, i.e. paradise, and to transfer himself to other places, i.e. to the world, and there, to take a bath in the water [...]'.<sup>26</sup>

26 Ibidem.

27 Ibidem: 'Dic ergo, quod nympha Salmacis, id est humana natura, puerum istum a principio vidit per fidem ipsumque per caritatem amavit et eius copulam et unionem affectavit [...] – 'Thus, you may say that the nymph Salmacis, i.e. human nature, from the beginning recognised this boy [namely the son of God] through her belief, and that she fell in love with him because of her inherent ability to love [caritas], and that she longed to be united with him [...]'.<sup>28</sup>

28 Ibidem: 'Ista Nympha ociosa potest figurare naturam humanam ocio deditam' – 'this lazy nymph may symbolise the human nature addicted to sloth'.<sup>29</sup>

29 By Zoane Rosso.

30 Cf. e.g., after the myth of Hermafrodito: 'E qui finis de la fabula de la terta sorella: cioè / de Alcinoe. Onde vediamo le allegorie [...]'.<sup>31</sup>

31 Giovanni dei Bonsignori, *Ovidio Methamorphoseos Vulgare* (Venice, Zoane Rosso: 1493), ad. lib. iv, cap. 17: 'Per Hermafrodito se puo intender lhuomo e la donna code in peccato'.<sup>32</sup>

32 *Ovide moralisé* iv, 2224–2389; cf. Chiari S. (ed.), *Renaissance Tales of Desire: Hermaphroditus and Salmacis, Theseus and Ariadne, Ceyx and Alcyone, and Orpheus his Journey to Hell* (Cambridge: 2012) 25 (in part i: "Hermaphroditus and Salmacis").<sup>33</sup>

33 Ibidem.

## Allegorical Interpretations of 16th- and 17th-Century Poets and Humanists

In the 16th century more and new allegorical readings of the myth became available, now often combined with illustrations: for example, in the illustrated Italian verse versions of the *Metamorphoses* in *rime stanze* (1522) by the Venetian poet Niccolò degli Agostini (before 1490–after 1530);<sup>34</sup> by the Venetian polymath and humanist Ludovico Dolce (ca. 1510–1568), called *Le trasformazioni* (ed. pr. 1553), which were dedicated to Emperor Charles V;<sup>35</sup> in the emblem book of the Huguenot schoolmaster and rector of the Collège de la Trinité<sup>36</sup> Barthélemy Aneau (ca. 1510–1561), called *Picta poesis* (ed. pr. 1552),<sup>37</sup> also available in French in his own translation (*Imagination poétique*, 1552),<sup>38</sup>

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- 34 *Tutti li libri de Ouidio Metamorphoseos tradutti dal litteral in verso vulgar con le sue allegorie in prosa* (Venice, Iacomo da Leco for Nicolo Zoppino and Vincentio di Pollo: 1522), fols. 38–39. For Niccolò degli Agostini's Italian *Metamorphoses* cf. Guthmüller B., *Ovidio Metamorphoseos vulgare. Formen und Funktionen der volkssprachlichen Wiedergabe klassischer Dichtung in der italienischen Renaissance* (Boppard a. Rhein: 1981) 191–236; 287–290; for Niccolò degli Agostini's biography and works Piscini A., art. "Degli Agostini, Niccolò", in *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani* 38 (1988), digitised: [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/niccolo-degli-agostini\\_%28Dizionario\\_Biografico%29/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/niccolo-degli-agostini_%28Dizionario_Biografico%29/). For the woodcut image of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus cf. <http://www.iconos.it/le-metamorfosi-di-ovidio/libro-iv/ermafroditto-e-salmace/immagini/19-ermafroditto-e-salmace/>.
- 35 *Le Trasformazioni di M. Lodovico Dolce, all'invittissimo e gloriosissimo Imperatore Carlo Quinto* (Venice, Gabriel Giolito de Ferrari: 1553) 90–93 (canto nono). For Dolce, cf. Terpening R.H., *Lodovico Dolce, Renaissance Man of Letters* (Toronto U.P.: 1997); Romei R., art. "Dolce, Ludovico", in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* 40 (1991), digitised: [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/lodovico-dolce\\_%28Dizionario\\_Biografico%29/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/lodovico-dolce_%28Dizionario_Biografico%29/); for Dolce as a theoretician of art cf., inter alia, Roskill M.K., *Dolce's Aretino and Venetian art theory of the Cinquecento* (Toronto U.P.: 2000); Rhein G., *Der Dialog über die Malerei. Lodovico Dolces Traktat und die Kunsttheorie des 16. Jahrhunderts. Mit einer kommentierten Neuübersetzung* (Cologne – Weimar – Vienna: 2008).
- 36 1538–1551 and 1558–1561. For Aneau's role as a schoolmaster, Groër G. de, *Réforme et Contre-Réforme en France: le Collège de la Trinité au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle à Lyon* (Paris: 1995).
- 37 *Picta poesis* (Lyons, Mathias Bonhomme: 1552; ab authore denuo recognita, idem: 1556) 32; Adams A. – Rawles St. – Saunders A., *A Bibliography of French Emblem Books* (Geneva: 1999–2002) F 085. For Aneau cf. Biot B., *Barthélemy Aneau, régent de la Renaissance lyonnaise* (Paris: 1996); the *Picta poesis* is available digitally: <http://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk/french/books.php?id=FANa&o=>.
- 38 (Lyons, Mathias Bonhomme: 1552). For the *Imagination poetique* cf. Saunders A., "The Influence of Ovid on a Sixteenth-Century Emblem Book: Barthélemy Aneau's *Imagination poétique*", *Nottingham French Studies* 16 (1977) 1–18; eadem, "The Bifocal Emblem Book: or How to Make one work cater for two distinct audiences", in *Emblems in Glasgow* (Glasgow:

and accompanied by the woodcuts of Bernard Salomon; in the 'interpretatio' of the *Metamorphoses* of the Lutheran poet, philologist, and Königsberg professor Georgius Sabinus (ed. pr. 1555);<sup>39</sup> in the verse explanation of the *Metamorphoses* by the German poet laureate Johannes Posthius, called *Tetrasticha*, published with the woodcuts of Virgil Solis (ed. pr. 1563),<sup>40</sup> and later with the ones by Chrispijn van de Passe (1606); in the *Metamorphoses* commentary by the Meistersänger and humanist Johann Spreng, from Augsburg, available in Latin (ed. pr. 1563)<sup>41</sup> and German (ed. pr. 1564),<sup>42</sup> or in the emblem books of the German poet Nicolaus Reusner, the *Picta poesis Ovidiana* (1580) and the *Emblemata* (1581),<sup>43</sup> to name but a few.

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1992) 113–133; and Cornilliat F., „De l'usage des images muettes: *Imagination poetique* de Barthélemy Aneau“, *L'Esprit créateur* 28,2 (1988) 78–88; Adams – Rawles – Saunders, *A Bibliography of French Emblem Books* F 084. The *Imagination poétique* is available digitally: <http://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk/french/books.php?id=FANb>.

- 39 Georgius Sabinus, *Fabularum Ovidii interpretatio tradita in Academia Regiomontana* (Wittenberg, heirs of Georg Rhau: 1555; ibidem, idem: 1556; ibidem, Petrus Seitz: 1559; ibidem, Clemes Schleich – Antonius Schöne: 1572). The interpretation was written during Sabinus's period as a professor at the university of Königsberg; cf. Mundt L., „Die Lehrtätigkeit des Georg Sabinus an der Universität Königsberg“, in Marti H. – Komorowski M. (eds.), *Die Universität Königsberg in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Cologne – Weimar – Vienna: 2008) 77–115.
- 40 *Tetrasticha* (Frankfurt, Sigmund Feyerabend: 1563). They were first published in Latin: each woodcut was accompanied by two elegiac disticha; later editions contained also four German verses. In Feyerabend's editions the *Tetrasticha* were combined with Virgil Solis's woodcuts. For Posthius, cf. Karrer K., *Johannes Posthius. Verzeichnis der Briefe und Werke mit Regesten und Posthius-Biographie* (Wiesbaden: 1993); for the *Tetrasticha*, ibidem 55 ff. For the two 1563 editions cf. ibidem, *Werkverzeichnis* 1563.1a and 1b.
- 41 *Metamorphoses Ovidii, argumentis quidem soluta oratione, enarrationibus autem et allegoriis elegiaco versu accuratissime expositae summaque diligentia et studio illustratae, per Magistrum Iohannem Sprengium Augustanum, una cum vivis singularium transformationum iconibus a Vergilio Solis, eximio pictore, delineatis* (Frankfurt, Sigmund Feyerabend: 1563). In this edition, the allegorical explanations were presented in verses, i.e. Latin elegiac distichs; the content of Ovid's narratives was summarised in short Latin prose texts ('argumenta'). Cf. Karrer, *Johannes Posthius* 56.
- 42 *Ovidii Nasonis [...] Metamorphoses oder Verwandlung, mit schönen künstlichen Figuren gezieret, auch kurtzen Argumenten und Auflegungen erkläret, und in Teutsche Reymen gebracht, durch Johann Spreng* (Franckfurt, Georg Raben – Sigmund Feyrabend – heirs of Wigand Hanen: 1564; reprint ibidem, idem: 1571). Both works were accompanied by Virgil Solis's illustrations. Cf. Karrer, *Johannes Posthius* 56.
- 43 Nicolaus Reusner, *Emblemata partim ethica et physica, partim historica et hieroglyphica* (Frankfurt, Sigmund Feyerabend: 1581), III, 25, p. 136–137.

### Sabinus: Warning Against Homosexuality and Bisexuality

While Niccolò degli Agostini in his Italian *L'Ovidio Metamorphoseos* (1522) and others<sup>44</sup> – following medieval commentators such as Giovanni dei Bonsignori – explained Salmacis allegorically as a man who fails to resist sexual lust,<sup>45</sup> Sabinus's interpretation is more specific and more explicit. According to him the myth particularly warns against engaging in 'obscene' sexual lust, by which he means homosexual and bisexual practices, including, of course, sodomy. The people of Asia Minor (the 'Cares'), Hermaphroditus's compatriots, serve as a negative example; they – he tells us – were known for their bisexuality. Therefore, they were called 'Hermaphrodit'.<sup>46</sup> On the other hand, Sabinus directs his comment against homosexuals: for them he applies the negative term 'mollis', which already was used as such in Roman antiquity. Sabinus explains that the Salmacis myth should be understood also as a warning against what he identifies as 'causes' of homosexuality: a wealthy ('divitiae') and lazy ('desidia') lifestyle, luxurious eating habits ('victus'), and a lack of the virtue

44 Such as the interpretation by the English poet and traveller George Sandys (1577–1644), son of Edwin Sandys, Archbishop of York, added to his English translation of Ovid, *Metamorphosis Englished* (first version in 1621, completed in 1626: *The First Five Bookes of Ovid's Metamorphosis* [London: 1621]; *Ovid's Metamorphosis Englished by George Sandys* [London: 1626]; for Sandys and his translation of Ovid cf. Lyne R., "Sandy's Virginian Ovid", in idem, *Ovid's Changing Worlds. English Metamorphoses, 1567–1632* (Oxford: 2001) 198–258; Davis R.B., "George Sandys v. William Stansby: The 1632 Edition of Ovid's Metamorphoses", *Library* 3 (1948) 193–212; Haynes J., *The Humanist Traveller: George Sandys's Relation of a Journey Begun An. Dom. 1610* (London: 1986); Davis R.B., *George Sandys: Poet-Adventurer* (New York: 1955). George Sandys takes the Salmacis myth as a warning against leisure and a delicate lifestyle, and against the lust and sexual desire that result from these things: 'The fine nymphe Salmacis, delighting only to adorn her person, to couch in shades, and bathe in her own fountain, burns in desire with the son of Hermes and Aphrodite [...]. Sensual love is the deformed issue of sloth and delicacy; and seldom survives his inglorious parents' (*Ovid's Metamorphosis Englished* [...] [Oxford, John Lichfield: 1632], ad. lib. iv); cf. Brumble H.D., *Classical Myths and Legends in the Middle Ages and Renaissance: A Dictionary of Allegorical Meanings* (Westport, CT: 1998) 20.

45 *L'Ovidio Metamorphoseos composto per Nicolo Agustini* (Venice, Iacomo da Leco for Nicolo Zoppino and Vincentio di Pollo: 1522), fol. 39r: 'si po anchora [...] per Salmace dire che lhomo che ha poca renitentia presto se fa libidinoso'.

46 Cf. Sabinus, *Ovidii interpretatio* (1555), ad lib. iv "Salmacis fons": 'Nam Hermaphroditus dicitur non solum, qui untrunque habet membrum, tam virile quam muliebre, sed etiam qui utranque venerem exercet' – 'Because Hermaphroditus is called not only he who has genitals of both sexes, male and female, but also he who makes love to both sexes'.

of *continentia* (a combination of temperance and moderation).<sup>47</sup> According to this allegorical explanation, everybody can become homosexual; therefore, it is of the utmost importance to keep an eye on one's lifestyle and diet. Probably the most dangerous lifestyle element for Sabinus is an excess of lazy leisure ('inertia et desidiosum otium'),<sup>48</sup> or the lack of focused activity, which brings forth obscene sexual wishes.

### Aneau: Misogyny and Explicit Interpretation

In his Latin and French emblem books [Fig. 3.2], the Huguenot schoolmaster Aneau also focuses his allegorical interpretation of the Salmacis myth on sexual practices, and he too is rather specific. He explains it as a warning addressed to boys to avoid sexual intercourse with women: otherwise they will lose their manliness, 'firm male virtue', and even their natural good health.<sup>49</sup> In a marked difference from Ovid, who describes Salmacis's crystal-clear water, he presents the pool as a dirty swamp,<sup>50</sup> clearly with an obscene connotation. In his allegorical explanation, Aneau identifies the pool with the vagina ('cunnus', 'pute femme'), which he regards as a poisonous and dangerous organ:

At revera hic fons nihil est aliud nisi cunnus,  
 Ardentis veneris suave refrigerium.  
 Cuius in obscena lama qui mergitur, illi  
 Firma viri virtus deperit atque calor  
 Naturalis, et hunc effoeminat uda libido  
 Viribus effoetis [i.e. effetis] semivirumque facit.<sup>51</sup>

47 Ibidem.

48 Ibidem: 'Porro Salmacidis Nymphae fabula non tam ad vicium aquae quam ad inertiam et desidiosum ocium, quo vires hominum enervantur, referenda est' – 'The story of the nymph Salmacis clearly should not be interpreted as that of poisonous water, but as that of laziness and idle leisure, which weaken the strength of men'.

49 Aneau, *Picta poesis* (1552) 32.

50 Ibidem, line 2: 'ibi turbidulis fons lutulentus aquis' – 'there is a sludgy fountain with muddy water'; in French *Imagination poétique* (1552), lines 2–4: '[...] fosse obscure [...] de bourbeuse fange/ Son eau troublée'.

51 Aneau, *Picta poesis* (1552) 32: 'Lama' is a very rare learned word which occurs in Horace, *Epistles* 1, 13, 10. 'Effetus' means somebody or something that has lost strength and power, or has become exhausted. Cicero, for example, in his dialogue *De senectute*, chapter 10, presents the thought that lust at a young age may take away the strength of a man so that his body becomes 'effetus': 'Et ista ipsa defectio virium adolescentiae vitiis efficitur

AGALMATA  
*Conscia sic culpa, celat miscrandapudorem:  
 Et latet in tenebris, fletq<sub>3</sub>, gemitq<sub>3</sub>, nigris.  
 Quam fugiunt & aues, & pellunt æthere torq:  
 Nec reperit turum pulsare puls a locum.*  
 DE HERMAPHRODITO.



D. AVSONII MAGNI.

**M**ercurio genitore satus, genitrice Cythere:  
 Nominis ut mixti, sic corporis Hermaphroditus  
 Concretus: sexu sed non perfectus utroq<sub>3</sub>:  
 Ambigua Veneris: neutro potiundus amori.

EIVSDEM.

Salmacis optatos concreta est nympha marito:  
 Felix virgo, sibi si scit inesse virum.

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FIGURE 3.1 Nicolaus Reusner, *Picta poesis Ovidiana* (Frankfurt a.M., Sigmund Feyerabend: 1580), "De Hermaphrodito", fol. 43v; copy of the Jesuit college of Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek Res/ A.lat.a 1327; urn:nbn:de:bvb:12-bsb00027986-7.



POESIS. 33  
FONS SALMACIDOS. LIBIDO  
EFFŒMINANS.



VALLIS in obscura sinus est umbrosus opaco.  
Atque ibi turbidulus fons lutulentus aquis.  
Quo qui fonte lavat: calidum restinguat ut aestū  
Quiq; paludoso mergitur in latice:  
Antea si vir erat bene masculus: exilit inde  
Ambiguo sexu semivir Androgynos.  
Talem salmacidos fontem finxere Poëta  
Hermaphroditus ubi æmina, virq; fuit.  
At rêvera hic fons nihil est aliud, nisi cunnius.  
Ardentis veneris suave refrigerium.  
Cuius in obscena lama qui mergitur: illi  
Firma viri virtus deperit, atque ea or  
Naturalis, & hunc effœminat vda lido.  
Viribus effœct. semivirumq; facit.

FIGURE 3.2 Barthélemy Aneau, *Picta poesis* (1552), emblem 32. Regensburg, Staatliche Bibliothek 999/Lat.rec.362, urn:nbn:de:bvb:12-bsbm103825-2.

In fact, this fountain is nothing but the vagina, which seems to be a sweet refreshment if one burns with desire. But he who dives into its obscene bog loses his firm male virtue and his healthy natural complexion, and moist lustful pleasure makes him as weak as a woman and, after he has lost his strength, transforms him into a half-man.

Aneau's allegorical explanation seems embarrassing because of its extreme misogyny and its explicit, repulsive realism. The latter may have been connected with Aneau's advanced philological humanism, which had many adherents in the 16th century, such as Guillaume Budé and Andrea Alciato. It had its origins in 15th-century Italy, for example in the Roman Academy, and was characterised by a new and intensive reception of such writers as Martial and Juvenal, and the PsVirgilian *Priapea*.<sup>52</sup> But it could also be that Aneau's repulsive language had a didactic background: maybe he chose it in order to keep young boys, such as the pupils of Lyon's Collège de la Trinité, from having sexual adventures. However, Aneau's explicit taste in sexual matters was certainly not shared by everybody. For example, Nicolaus Reusner incorporated Aneau's emblematic epigram in his *Picta poesis Ovidiana* (1580) and combined it with Virgil Solis's Salmacis woodcut.<sup>53</sup> However, Reusner had difficulties with the above-quoted explicitness of Aneau's allegorical interpretation, probably for reasons of *decorum*,<sup>54</sup> and therefore he eliminated it, i.e. he deleted the last six verses. What remains in Reusner's version of Aneau's poem is a general warning against women and having sexual affairs, which is still threatening, since it promises the loss of manliness as punishment.

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saepius quam senectutis; libidinosa etenim et intemperans adolecentia effetum corpus tradit senectuti'. 'Semivir' means that he who has intercourse with a woman will become a 'half-man', i.e. cease to be a 'real, manly man' or a man in the proper sense of the word. On the Glasgow emblem site it is translated as 'a male eunuch'; this may be misleading, since eunuchs have lost part of their genitals, whereas Hermaphroditus kept his male genitals.

52 Cf. Enenkel, "Neo-Latin Erotic and Pornographic Literature".

53 *Picta poesis Ovidiana* (Frankfurt a.M., Sigmund Feyerabend: 1580), "De Hermaphroditio", fols. 43v–44r.

54 For this aspect, cf. Enenkel K.A.E., "Ovid-Emblematik als Scherenschnitt und Montage. Aneaus *Picta poesis* in Reusners *Picta poesis Ovidiana*", in Van Vaeck M. – Brems H. – Claassens H.M. (eds.), *The Stone of Alciato. Literature and Visual Culture in the Low Countries. Essays in Honour of Karel Porteman* (Louvain: 2003) 729–749, here 738–739.



### Spreng: The Grand Tour and the Vanity of the World

Spreng understood the myth specifically as a moral warning for young and well-to-do men when they made their Grand Tour; this extended journey abroad during one's studies, which lasted a year or so, was largely a 16th- and 17th-century phenomenon.<sup>55</sup> Spreng instructs the young men particularly not to engage in love affairs, not to be overwhelmed by 'böś begier'. Otherwise they will be cheated ('betrogen') and seduced into vices ('zu vil lastern gezogen'), obviously by people who want to profit from them.<sup>56</sup> Of course, Spreng had in mind primarily prostitutes and courtesans, but it would be even worse for a young man on his Grand Tour to marry a woman who had seduced him. Spreng also thought about this, as is apparent in his 'Weitere Erklärung': 'Komm zu mir, du schöner Knab [...]; Salmacis says, 'Wir woellen einen Heuraht machen/ Und greiffen zu ehrlichen [ehlichen?] Sachen'.<sup>57</sup> Hermaphroditus first seems to react adequately: 'Der Jung [...] wil sich nicht/ Eynlassen zu

55 For the early modern Grand Tour cf. i.a. Babel R. (ed.), *Grand Tour. Adeliges Reisen und europäische Kultur vom 14. bis zum 18. Jahrhundert* (Ostfildern: 2005); Trease G., *The Grand Tour* (Yale U.P.: 1991); Brilli A., *Reisen in Italien. Die Kulturgeschichte der klassischen Italienreise vom 16. bis zum 18. Jahrhundert* (Cologne: 1989); idem, *Als Reisen eine Kunst war – Vom Beginn des modernen Tourismus: Die „Grand Tour“* (Berlin: 2001); Grosser Th., "Reisen und soziale Eliten. Kavalierstour – Patrizierreise – bürgerliche Bildungsreise", in: Maurer M. (ed.), *Neue Impulse der Reiseforschung* (Berlin: 1999) 136–176; Black J., *The British and the Grand Tour* (Beckenham: 1985); idem, *The British Abroad. The Grand Tour in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: 1992); Chaney E. – Wilks T. (eds.), *The Jacobean Grand Tour: Early Stuart Travellers in Europe* (London: 2014); Hibbert Ch., *The Grand Tour* (London: 1969); Frank-van Westrienen A., *De groote Tour: Tekeningen van de educatiereis der Nederlanders in de zeventiende eeuw* (Amsterdam: 1983); Verhoeven G., *Europe within Reach. Netherlandish Travellers on the Grand Tour and Beyond (1585–1750)* (Leiden-Boston: 2009); Bender E., *Die Prinzenreise. Bildungsaufenthalt und Kavalierstour im höfischen Kontext gegen Ende des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin: 2011); Leibetseder M., *Kavalierstour – Bildungsreise – Grand Tour: Reisen, Bildung und Wissenserwerb in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Cologne: 2004); Berns J.J., "Peregrinatio academica und Kavalierstour", in Wiedemann C. (ed.), *Rom – Paris – London. Erfahrung und Selbsterfahrung deutscher Schriftsteller und Künstler in fremden Metropolen* (Stuttgart: 1988) 155–181.

56 Spreng, *Metamorphoses oder Verwandlung* (1564), fol. 102 r–v: 'Durch das Exempel lehren wir/ Wie die jugend durch böś begier/ Wann in fremde Land hinaus/ Thut ziehen zu (lege: auss) dess Vatters hauss/ Zum offtermals werde betrogen/ und zu vil lastern gezogen'.

57 Spreng, *Metamorphoses oder Verwandlung* (1564), fol. 101v: 'Come to me, beautiful boy; let's marry, and organise the official ceremony'.

Ehlicher pflicht'.<sup>58</sup> In Spreng's explanation, Salmacis's prayer to the gods had, in fact, the purpose of forcing the boy to marry her.

In more general terms, in Spreng's allegory Salmacis's pool represents the vanity of the world, which causes spiritual downfall – whoever dives into this pool will be drowned: 'Wer in den See der Welt sich senckt/ Wird liederlich darin ertrenckt'.<sup>59</sup> In the Latin 'Allegoria', Spreng changes Ovid's pool, with its crystal-clear water, into an enormous swamp ('vasta [...] palus'), the swamp of earthly things, the swamp of sins:

Exemplum docet, hoc peccandi semita quam sit  
 Lubrica, quam fallax perditionis iter.  
 Heu lapsus facilis iuvenilibus evenit annis!  
 Nam puer a patria dum solet ire domo  
 Externasque cupit petulans invisere gentes,  
 In vasta mundi saepe palude perit.<sup>60</sup>

From this example we learn how slippery the path of sin is, how treacherous the way to hell. How easily one falls into sin at a young age! Because when a boy leaves his paternal house and fatherland, and with too much confidence enjoys visiting other nations (or: foreign people), he perishes in the swamp of the world.

Thus, for Spreng Hermaphroditus represents the young Christian traveller who is in danger of drowning in the swamp of worldly things.

### Posthius and Reusner: Warnings against Lazy, Luxurious, and Modern Lifestyles

Posthius interpreted the myth as a moral warning against an inert lifestyle dedicated to 'weak leisure' ('molle otium'), which he saw represented by Salmacis: he who devotes his life to leisure will lose his manliness and courage.<sup>61</sup> It could be that Posthius took over the element of leisure from Sabinus's allegorical

58 Ibidem: 'The boy does not want to accept the obligation of marriage'.

59 Ibidem.

60 Spreng, *Metamorphoses Ovidii*, [...] *enarrationibus* [...] *et allegoriis elegiaco versu* (1563), fol. 51v.

61 Posthius 1564, ad. loc.: '[...] Salmacidis lymphae sunt desidis ocia vitae,/ Quae faciunt molles et sine corde viros' – 'the water of Salmacis represents the leisure of a lazy

explanation, but he separated it from its sexual contextualisation, i.e. homosexual or bisexual practices. As Posthius's combination of 'molles' with 'et sine corde viros' (literally: 'men without heart') shows, 'molles' does not refer to homosexuality but to a lack of courage – courage being considered a male virtue. Besides, Posthius could also base his interpretation on Ovid's narrative, which described Salmacis as the lazy nymph who refuses to take on 'labores' and to go hunting, but enjoys sitting by her pool all day.<sup>62</sup>

In a sense, Posthius's explanation seems to resemble one of the allegorical interpretations of Pierre Besuire, in which Salmacis represented 'the lazy nature of man' ('naturam humanam otio deditam').<sup>63</sup> Besuire's interpretation, as appears from the context, refers to the human soul and its relationship with Christ (= Hermaphrodite), i.e. it was meant in a spiritual sense. Therefore, Besuire's 'otium' must refer to sloth – in Latin also called *acedia*, *desidia*, or *torpor* – one of the seven deadly sins.<sup>64</sup> *Acedia* consists of a lack of spiritual fire, religious feelings, and of interest in performing one's duties with respect to God and one's fellow man; it also consists of spiritual apathy, boredom, and despair with respect to god, spiritual goods, and salvation. *Acedia* or *desidia* was originally conceived as a sin of people who lived the contemplative life – monks and hermits – but in the long run, certainly from the 13th century on, it was considered to be relevant for all Christian believers.<sup>65</sup>

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lifestyle'/ which brings forth men without heart'; in the German translation: '[...] Der Brunn treg und faul tag bedeut/ Die machen blöd und forchtsam leut'.

62 Ovid, *Metamorphoses* IV, 302–315.

63 Berchorius Petrus, *Metamorphosis Ovidiana moraliter a Magistro Thoma Walleys Anglico de professione praedicatorum sub sanctissimo patre Dominico explanata* [...] (Paris, Badius Ascensius: 1509), fol. 40r (ad lib. IV, fab. 8): 'Ista Nympha ociosa potest figurare naturam humanam ocio deditam' – 'this lazy nymph may symbolise the human nature addicted to sloth'.

64 For *acedia*, see, *inter alia*, Post W., *Acedia – Das Laster der Trägheit. Zur Geschichte der siebten Todsünde* (Freiburg i. Br.: 2011); Theunissen M., *Vorentwürfe der Moderne. Antike Melancholie und die Acedia des Mittelalters* (Berlin: 1996); Werner J., *Die sieben Todsünden* (Stuttgart: 1999); Tessore T., *I vizi capitali* (Rome: 2009); Wasserstein W., *Accidia* (Milan: 2006); and Blöcker S., *Studien zur Ikonographie der sieben Todsünden in der niederländischen und deutschen Malerei und Graphik 1450–1560* (Münster: 1993).

65 Cf. Blöcker, *Studien zur Ikonographie der sieben Todsünden* 90: 'Doch ist *acedia* zu dieser Zeit (i.e. 15th century) keine rein monastische Sünde mehr. Im Zuge der Scholastik ist das Konzept der geistigen Trägheit auch auf den Laienbereich ausgedehnt worden. Zunächst stehen noch Versäumnisse in den religiösen Pflichten im Vordergrund der Behandlung [...]. Aber im Laufe der Zeit gerät die spirituelle Seite der Trägheit gegenüber der offensichtlichen und anschaulicheren physischen Komponente zurück. Faulheit und körperliche Lethargie zählen nunmehr zu den Haupteigenschaften der *acedia*'.

In the late Middle Ages (14th and 15th centuries), in fact, *acedia* or *desidia* was thought to play a pivotal role Christian life: thus, it was conceived as a kind of central sin which brings forth all kinds of other vices or sins. This view is illustrated, for example, by a copperplate etching after a drawing of Pieter Breughel the Elder (ca. 1525–1569), made by Hieronymus Cock (1558). The personification of sloth, called ‘Desidia’, is depicted in the middle of the picture: a lazy older woman sitting on a donkey (the symbol of laziness)<sup>66</sup> and sleeping, laying her head in her hand. ‘Desidia’ causes other deadly sins, for example ‘lust’ and ‘gluttony’ (‘gula’): behind ‘Desidia’, in the background, one can see a naked woman with the same sleeping gesture, the personification of lust; and just behind the naked woman is a bed with a young couple having sex. To the right of ‘Desidia’ another bed is depicted – drawn by a monk who is in fact a demon – and in this bed we see another lazy woman, who is being fed by a devil – a combination of *gula* and laziness. The woodcut is accompanied by a moral inscription in a Latin hexameter: ‘Segnities robur frangit, longa ocia nervos’ – ‘Laziness and long-lasting leisure destroy one’s strength’.

Posthūs’s allegorical explanation sounds very similar to the inscription to Breughel’s ‘Desidia’, but it is nevertheless different. The Protestant Posthūs does not have in mind the Catholic deadly sin of *acedia*, but a more general moral notion that it is one’s duty to lead an active life; moreover, his moral message has a gender bias – leisure destroys manliness and especially male courage.

In Reusner’s allegorical explanation in his *Emblemata* (1581), the myth has five meanings, which may be partly interconnected [Fig. 3.3]. In the first, in fact, Reusner repeats Posthūs’s explanation (he knew his *Tetrasticha* very well): he took the myth as a warning against a lifestyle dedicated to leisure (‘desidia’).<sup>67</sup> Similar to Posthūs, the Lutheran Reusner did not conceive of ‘desidia’ as the Catholic deadly sin, but as a more general moral concept. Second, he takes the myth as a warning against a luxurious lifestyle, especially luxurious dining (‘qui laute comedit’).<sup>68</sup> third, it warns against the habit of frequently

66 Cf. ibidem 95: ‘Neben dem Zustand des Schlafes sind es nunmehr die Begleittiere, die das Wesen der Sünde in seinen unterschiedlichen Aspekten aufdecken. In erster Linie ist dies der Esel [...]’.

67 Reusner, *Emblemata* (1581), III, 25, p. 136, line 3: ‘Quisquis desidiam sectatur [...]’ – ‘Whoever pursues laziness’; lines 7–8: ‘(Qui) nec sua cum duris sudoribus ocia miscet/ Nec quod agat semper quodque sequatur, habet’ – ‘Whoever does not alternate leisure with hard labour/ And never has anything to do or to care for’.

68 Ibidem, lines 3 and 4: ‘Quisquis [...] sectatur luxuriam,/ Qui laute comedit [...]’ – ‘Whoever pursues a luxurious lifestyle,/ Who dines luxuriously’. In Latin texts from Roman antiquity, ‘luxuria’ often refers to sexual pleasure, but in humanist texts it also refers to ‘luxury’



FIGURE 3.3 Nicolaus Reusner, *Emblemata* (1581), III, 25, p. 136. BSB  
 urn:nbn:de:bvb:12-bsb00087671-2.

taking baths,<sup>69</sup> which may refer to either private baths or mineral baths. In the late Middle Ages and the early modern period, people who could afford it were crazy about frequently visiting natural baths (hot springs, 'wildbeder', etc.), and they considered it to be an important means of health care and of spending leisure time, as one can read, for example, in the *Badenfahrtbüchlein*, composed by the German physician and humanist Georgius Pictorius (1560).<sup>70</sup> Reusner's remark could in itself be directed to both forms of bathing. It could refer to private baths because, unlike today, this was not normal daily business; many of Reusner's contemporaries probably would have regarded frequent bathing as an exaggerated form of body care. However, the combination of 'qui lavat atque bibit' – 'who uses to taking baths and to drinking' suggests that Reusner meant here natural mineral baths that included drinking cures. Also, Solis's woodcut seems to suit this interpretation quite well: one could interpret the couple on the image as two young people taking a bath [Fig. 3.3].

In contemporary experience, mineral baths were regarded as proper places for enjoying leisure, and not least as a place for having affairs. Especially in the German Empire, Reusner's cultural environment, bathing was very popular among the well-to-do. It has a paradigmatic meaning that the well-known combination of bathing and enjoying leisure – with music, dining, drinking, and love – is chosen as the title illustration to a treatise on mineral baths, the *Traktat der Wildbeder Natuer* (1519), written by the German physician Laurentius Phries [Fig. 3.4].<sup>71</sup>

The collection of lyrical poems with the title *Baiae* written between 1473 and the 1490s by the chancellor of the Kingdom of Naples, Giovanni Pontano, is entirely devoted to the erotic play in the Italian volcanic baths in the surrounding area of Naples.<sup>72</sup> Given the fact that in the 15th and 16th centuries, 'bathing' was frequently associated with love affairs and sexual pleasure, it is a bit surprising that Reusner in his emblematic allegory seems to ignore sexual pleasure, especially if one takes into account that Salmacis tries to seduce the male protagonist. Reusner's three allegorical interpretations so far – leisure,

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in the modern sense; the context in which Reusner uses 'luxuria' – namely 'who dines luxuriously' – shows that he had the modern notion of 'luxury' in mind.

69 Ibidem, line 4: '[...] qui lavat, atque bibit' – 'who is used to taking baths and to drink (or: with drinking cures)'. 'Bibit' probably does not refer to the use of alcohol, but to drinking mineral water in baths.

70 Pictorius Georgius, *Badenfahrtbüchlein* (Frankfurt a.M., Peter Schmid: 1560; reprint Freiburg-Basel-Wien: 1980).

71 (Strasbourg: 1519), title page.

72 Cf. Pontano Giovanni, *Baiae*, transl. by R.G. Dennis, I Tatti vol. 22 (Cambridge, Mass.: 2006).





FIGURE 3.4 Laurentius Phries, *Traktat der Wildbeder Natuer* (Strasbourg: 1519), title page. BSB, [urn:nbn:de:bvb:12-bsb10164505-6](https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:bvb:12-bsb10164505-6).

luxurious lifestyle with extravagant eating habits, and frequenting baths – may well go together, but they are not identical or dependent on each other. In Reusner's opinion, whoever engages in these vices will lose his manliness, as was the case with poor Hermaphroditus.

And this also goes for Reusner's fourth and fifth allegorical explanations. But, unlike the others, these explanations have no real connection with the scene depicted on the woodcut. The fourth interpretation is directed against men who care a lot about their looks, who are used to brushing their hair and looking into the mirror: 'Qui fingit vultus ornatque subinde capillos,/ Ad speculum, captans sic simulacra sui' – 'Whoever (a man) composes his face looking into a mirror, and time and again corrects his hair, and cannot get enough of watching his image'.<sup>73</sup>

In Reusner's fifth interpretation, the Salmacis myth warns men to indulge in narcissistic behaviour.<sup>74</sup> It seems that among these interpretations, Reusner was most concerned about the last two, which he seems to have closely connected: obviously he regarded a man who looks in a mirror as a narcissist. He might have considered this behaviour to be acceptable for women, but not for men. The crucial importance of the last two interpretations appears in the form of the emblem's motto: 'Forma viros neglecta decet' – 'For a man it is proper not to care about his looks', a quote from Ovid, from his *Ars amatoria* (1, 509) where he discusses male beauty.<sup>75</sup> I think that it is no coincidence that Reusner chose as the following emblem the myth of Narcissus (III, 26), which he equipped with Virgil Solis's woodcut. Apparently Reusner was greatly concerned with the vain idleness of contemporary men. It could well be that he was upset about the new hairstyle in the 1570s: it became fashionable for men to wear their hair longer and carefully brushed back, whereas in the previous period men's haircuts had been very short. Reusner did not participate in the new hairstyle fashion, as one can see on his author's portraits from the 1580s and 1590s [Fig. 3.5].

73 Reusner, *Emblemata* (1581), book III, 5, p. 136, lines 5–6.

74 Ibidem, lines 9–10: 'Denique qui se stultus amat: sine corde virili/ Semimarem merito dixeris esse virum' – 'In the end, who stupidly loves himself:/ You may rightly call such a person a half-man, since he does not have the heart of a man'.

75 The motto is also repeated in the last distichon of the epigram.





FIGURE 3.5

*Author's portrait of Nicolaus Reusner, 1580, woodcut. BSB, urn:nbn:de:bvb:12-bsb00087671-2.*

### Positive Interpretations of the Salmacis Myth in the Early Modern Period

In the 16th century and the first decennia of the 17th century, there were still favourable interpretations of the myth as well. Ludovico Dolce, for example, understood Hermaphroditus in a Neoplatonic sense as the ideal spiritual union of man with god's mind that occurs during philosophical contemplation.<sup>76</sup> In a sense, Dolce's Neoplatonic allegory is similar to Pierre Besuire's religious interpretation of Salmacis as man longing to be spiritually united with god. Another spiritual and esoteric interpretation was presented by the Rosicrucian Michael Maier, who in his emblem books *Symbola aureae mensae* (1617) and *Atalanta fugiens* (1618) hailed Hermaphroditus as the highly valuable alchemical substance "Rebis" (= 'res' + 'bis'), i.e. a fusion of the elements sulfur and mercury.<sup>77</sup>

76 *Le Trasformazioni di M. Lodovico Dolce* [...] (Venice, Gabriel Giolito De Ferrari: 1553) 93: 'Si puo prender per Hermafrodito la mirabile unione, che fa l'anima con Dio, lasciando queste cose transitorie e mortali, e poggiando alla contemplazione delle Divine'; cf. also Brumble, *Classical Myths* 207.

77 Michael Maier, *Atalanta fugiens, hoc est Emblemata nova de secretis naturae chymica, accommodata partim oculis et intellectui, figuris cupro incis adiectisque sententiis, epigrammatis et notis, partim auribus et recreationi animi plus minus 50 fugis musicalibus trium*

In his alchemical interpretation, Maier drew on a late medieval tradition, especially popular in the 16th century, in which Hermaphrodite figured as the quintessence.<sup>78</sup>

According to the young engraver Magdalena van de Passe (ca. 1600–1638) who was active in Utrecht,<sup>79</sup> the myth of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus symbolised the Christian marriage, being the ideal union of man and woman. This is the way she interpreted the myth in 1623 in the Latin text accompanying her engraving, which she dedicated to the Dutch poet, emblematiser, and new ‘raadspensionaris’ Jacob Cats [Fig. 3.6].<sup>80</sup> In the Latin verse subscription – an epigram, probably composed by herself – she says:

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*vocum [...]* (Frankfurt a. M., Johann Oppenheim – Theodor de Bry: 1618) 161, emblem 38 “De secretis naturae. Rebis, ut Hermaphroditus, nascitur ex duobus montibus, Mercurii et Veneris” (“On the secrets of nature. Rebis comes forth from two mountains, those of Mercury and of Venus, as the Hermaphrodite does”); cf. Willard Th., “Metamorphoses of Metals: Ovid and the Alchemists”, in: Keith A. – Rupp S.J. (eds.), *Metamorphosis: The Changing Face of Ovid in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Toronto: 2007) 151; Aurnhammer A., “Zum Hermaphroditen in der Sinnbildkunst der Alchemisten”, in Meinel Ch. (ed.), *Die Alchemie in der europäischen Kultur- und Wissenschaftsgeschichte* (Wiesbaden: 1986) (Wolfenbütteler Forschungen 32) (179–200), here 190ff. In the German translation of 1708 the epigram runs as follows: ‘Vom Rebis durch und durch der Weisen Rede geht,/ Dass Mann- und Weibsperson an einem Körper sind;/ Dass eingecörpert zwei auf einem Berge stehen,/ Und Hermes Flüchtigkeit in Venus Spass sich find./ Verachte nicht der zwei Geschlechtern Leib,/ Weil aller Reichtum kommt vom Mann sowohl als Weib’. Cf. Hofmaier Th., *Michael Maiers Chymisches Cabinet, Atalanta fugiens deutsch nach der Ausgabe von 1708* (Berlin-Basel: 2007) 227.

78 Cf. Aurnhammer A., “Zum Hermaphroditen in der Sinnbildkunst der Alchemisten”; idem, *Androgynie. Studien zu einem Motiv in der europäischen Literatur* (Cologne – Vienna: 1986) 118–128; Biedermann H., “Das Androgyn-Symbol in der Alchemie”, in Prinz U. (ed.), *Androgyn. Sehnsucht nach Vollkommenheit* (exh. Cat. Berlin: 1986) 57–74; Hild H., art. “Hermaphrodit”, in Priesner C. – Figala K. (eds.), *Alchemie. Lexikon einer hermetischen Wissenschaft* (Munich: 1998) 172–173; Limbeck S., “Bilder alchemistischer Hermaphroditen (15. Jahrhundert)”, in *Männlich-weiblich-zwischen*, 22/02/2016, <https://intersex.hypotheses.org/2600>. Lizenz: CC BY-SA 3.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/>). 28/02/2016.

79 For Magdalena van de Passe cf. the art. by Ilja Veldman in the *Digitaal Nederlands vrouwenlexicon* <http://resources.huygens.knaw.nl/vrouwenlexicon/lemmata/data/Passe>.

80 Magdalena van de Passe, *Salmacis and Hermaphroditus*, engraving after a painting by Jacob Pynas, 1623. 20,3 × 22,7 cm, e.g. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (no. RP-P-OB-15.828). Digitally available through wikimedia commons, <https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/nl/collectie/RP-P-OB-15.828>; URL: <http://hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.collect.16114>. For the engraving cf. Franken D. – Laschitzer S., *L'oeuvre gravé des Van de Passe* (1975), vol. 1. 186, 309–310 (cat.nos. 979 and 1379). Magdalena van de Passe's engraving was remade for

Parcito lasciva hanc tabulam ridere iuventus,  
 Non hic impuro turpis ab igne calor,  
 Verum coniugii specimen amplectitur aptum,  
 Lungunturque animo vir mulierque pari.

Beware, lecherous young people, of making fun of this depiction: it does not show the obscene heat that comes from a filthy fire, but an appropriate image of marriage, and of the unanimous union of man and woman.

Because in Ovid's narrative gender is of pivotal importance, it is a compelling question what role exactly gender played in the allegorical interpretations. First, it is important to note that the majority of the allegories comment on the behaviour and moral performance of men, not women, and they direct their moral advice to men. This starts with Albericus and is still there in the 17th century. Advice regarding the Grand Tour, such as in Spreng's allegorical interpretation; or on the relationship between philosophy and rhetoric, such as in Albericus's; or between leisure and labour, such as in Posthius's and Reusner's comments; or warnings against women, against having sexual intercourse or visiting prostitutes, or against sodomy and other homosexual and bisexual practices, were meant for men only. The advice and warnings of these allegories are themselves highly gendered. In most of them the female plays a negative role. Moral faults, vices, and sin are described or identified as female, or otherwise get a female touch. For example, Boccaccio regarded thoughtless or lascivious speech ('sermo lasciviens') as typically female, whereas speech should be 'manly'.<sup>81</sup> Warnings against leisure, luxurious eating habits, frequent visits to mineral baths, idleness, care for one's hairstyle etc., such as the ones by Posthius, Reusner, and Sandys, were also directed to men (although theoretically women could have been included); the interesting thing is that these vices were presented as having the effect of making a man feminine and destroying his manliness.

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Pierre du Ryer's French edition of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, *Les Metamorphoses d'Ovide* (Brussels: 1677), and the 1703 Amsterdam edition of Vondel's Dutch translation of the *Metamorphoses*: *Publius Ovidius Nazoos Herscheppinge, in Nederduitsch dicht vertaeld door J.V. Vondel. Verrijkt met de historische, zede- en staetkundige aenmerkingen van den Heere Pieter Du-Ryer [...]*. Nu eerst vertaeld en in 't licht gegeven. Met schoone kopere platen (Amsterdam, P. and J. Blaeu, J. and G. Janssonius: 1703) 125. It is noteworthy that the image of Magdalena van de Passe's engraving does not really reflect her interpretation. After all, she was not the inventor of the engraving, but the painter Jacob Pynas, whom she also mentions ('IS Pinas pinxit'). For Pynas's lost painting and its prehistory cf. below.

81 Cf. above.



FIGURE 3.6 *Magdalena van de Pisse, Salmacis and Hermaphroditus. Engraving (1623) after a painting by Jacob Pynas, 20,3 x 22,7 cm. Public domain. Wikimedia commons.*

### Gender in the Visual Representations of the Salmacis Myth

As we have seen, in the 14th to the 17th centuries an impressive number of allegorical interpretations of the Salmacis myth existed, with various meanings and shades of meaning. A considerable portion of them were also accessible to painters and artists, since these texts were either published in the vernacular or *also* available in the vernacular and, importantly, accompanied by images; in so-called *Painter's Bibles*<sup>82</sup> the complete Ovidian *Metamorphoses* were illustrated with an exuberant set of woodcuts or engravings, made by e.g. Bernard Salomon (1550s), Virgil Solis (1560s), Pieter van der Borcht (1591), Antonio Tempesta (1606), and Chrispijn van de Passe the Elder (1607).<sup>83</sup> These illustrations accompanied various works, Nachdichtungen, abridgements, emblematic versions of, and comments on the *Metamorphoses*. For example Virgil Solis's set accompanied not only Ovid's text, but also Posthius's explanations, Spreng's allegorical commentaries, and Reusner's *Emblemata*. These *Painter's Bibles* were a huge success,<sup>84</sup> and they had a great impact on the production of paintings with mythological scenes and representations of the nude in the late 16th century and throughout the 17th century.<sup>85</sup> As the title page

82 The term is used by e.g. Karel van Mander, in the (Dutch) preface of his *Wtlegging op den Metamorphosis*. Cf. Sluijter E.J., *De "heydensche fabulen" in de Noordnederlandse schilderkunst, circa 1590–1670. Een proeve van beschrijving en interpretatie van verhalende onderwerpen uit de klassieke mythologie* (diss. Leiden: 1986) 312–321; idem, *De 'heydensche fabulen' in de schilderkunst van de Gouden Eeuw. Verhalen uit de klassieke mythologie in de Noordelijke Nederlanden, circa 1590–1670* (Leiden: 2000; revised edition of the dissertation of 1986) 179–183.

83 Cf. Sluijter, *De "heydensche fabulen" in de Noordnederlandse schilderkunst* 306–312; idem, *De 'heydensche fabulen' in de schilderkunst van de Gouden Eeuw* 175–179.

84 Cf. e.g. Karrer's remark on Posthius's *Tetrasticha*, Karrer, *Johannes Posthius* 56: 'Diese brachte Feyerabend noch im selben Jahr (i.e. 1563) in zwei verschiedenen Formaten heraus, wobei die eine Ausgabe als Stammbuch dienen konnte, da darin nur die Blattvorderseiten bedruckt sind; sie fand – den zahlreichen erhaltenen Exemplaren zufolge – *reissenden Absatz*' (emphasis mine).

85 Cf. Sluijter E.J., "Prestige and Emulation, Eroticism and Morality: Mythology and the Nude in Dutch Painting of the 16th and 17th Century", in Paarlberg S. (ed.), *Greek Gods and Heroes in the Age of Rubens and Rembrandt* (Athens-Dordrecht: 2000/2001) (35–65) 45ff. digitally accessible: <http://www.ericjansluijter.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/2001-Greek-gods-heroes-2.pdf>; cf. Sluijter, *De "heydensche fabulen" in de Noordnederlandse schilderkunst* passim; idem, *De 'heydensche fabulen' in de schilderkunst van de Gouden Eeuw* passim.

explicitly states, the work should be used by ‘all painters, goldsmiths, and sculptors’.<sup>86</sup>

What role did gender play in the depictions of the Salmacis myth? Manuscript illuminations were mostly made in the 14th and 15th centuries and usually show man and woman standing together in the pool (or an artificial fountain), preferably with the merging of the two bodies into one. They accompany e.g. Pierre Besuire’s *Ovidius moralizatus* (completed ca. 1340) [Fig. 3.7], the *Ovide moralisé* which was dedicated to the Queen of France, Jeanne de Bourgogne (written by an anonymous author in the beginning of the 14th century, ascribed to Chrétien Legouais)<sup>87</sup> [Fig. 3.8A] or Christine de Pizan’s (1365–ca. 1434) mythological exegesis in her *Epistre de Orthea a Hector* (1399/1400, chapter 82) [Fig. 3.8B],<sup>88</sup> and they illustrate spiritual allegorical interpretations of the myth, such as the ones discussed above. Besuire identified Hermaphroditus with Christ, and Salmacis with the soul of the believer that longs to become one with the Lord. A manuscript illustration to (a French translation of) Besuire’s *Ovidius moralizatus*, painted ca. 1470/ 80 in Brugge, indeed shows that the lower parts of Salmacis’s and Hermaphrodite’s bodies have already become one [Fig. 3.7]. Christine de Pizan interpreted the myth as an example of the importance of religious devotion and belief in the power of one’s spiritual efforts. Salmacis functions as an image of the good and successful Christian whose prayer is heard by God. In these manuscript illuminations<sup>89</sup> of the 14th and 15th centuries, man and woman make a totally harmonious impression. They look like a loving couple: they embrace and even kiss each other as if they were about to make love [Figs. 3.7, 3.8A and B]; Hermaphroditus does not resist Salmacis; and they are in no way fighting. The merging of the bodies, which is the last part of Ovid’s narrative (15), was obviously considered the most important aspect of the Salmacis myth. The Brugge illumination of 1470/80 presents the merging itself [Fig. 3.7], the manuscript from the Bibliothèque de

86 ‘Allen Maler, Goldtschmidten, und Bildthauwern zu nutz sei’; cf. Karrer, *Johannes Posthius* 56.

87 The *Ovide moralisé* in French has 72.000 verses and is transmitted in some 24 manuscripts. For its allegorical interpretations and the images of the Ovidian myths cf. *inter alia* Clier-Colombani F., *Images et Imaginaires dans l’Ovide moralisé* (Paris: 2017); Possamaï M., ‘L’*Ovide moralisé*, ou la « bonne glose » des *Métamorphoses* d’Ovide’, *Cahiers de linguistique hispanique médiévale* 31 (2008) 181–206; Possamaï-Pérez M. (ed.), *Nouvelles études sur l’Ovide moralisé* (Paris: 2009); eadem, *L’Ovide moralisé : essai d’interprétation* (Paris: 2006).

88 See the illumination in the manuscript of the *Epistre de Orthea a Hector*, Harley 4431, fol. 132v.

89 C. Lord, ‘Three Manuscripts of the *Ovide moralisé*’, *The Art Bulletin* 57, 2 (1975) 161–175; [http://www.arlima.net/mp/ovide\\_moralise.html](http://www.arlima.net/mp/ovide_moralise.html).



FIGURE 3.7 Salmacis and Hermaphroditus, *manuscript illumination*, from: Pierre Besuire (Petrus Berchorius), Ovidius Moralizatus, French translation from the Latin original, manuscript made in Brugge, ca. 1470–1480. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, ms. Français 137, fol. 49r. [Gallica.bnf.fr/Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des manuscrits, Français 137, fol. 49r](http://Gallica.bnf.fr/Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des manuscrits, Français 137, fol. 49r).





FIGURE 3.8A Salmacis and Hermaphroditus, *manuscript illumination, made by an anonymous French painter, ca. 1330, from: Chrétien Legouais, Ovide Moralisé, Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, MS. 5069 réserve, fol. 47r. Gallica.bnf.fr./ Bibliothèque nationale de France, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, MS. 5069 réserve, fol. 47r.*





FIGURE 3.8B Salmacis and Hermaphroditus, manuscript illumination, ca. 1410, from: *Epistre de Orthea a Hector*, Harley 4431, fol. 132v. Attributed to the Master of the Cité des Dames and workshop and to the Master of the Duke of Bedford. Public domain, link <http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/ILLUMIN.ASP?Size=mid&IllID=22613>.

l'Arsenal shows the state just before the unification. In two manuscripts of the *Ovide moralisé*, the one from Rouen (made between 1315 and 1325),<sup>90</sup> and another one from the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal (made ca. 1330) [Fig. 3.8A],<sup>91</sup> the merging is even shown through a kind of underwater perspective.

The majority of the early modern representations of the myth between ca. 1515 and 1770, however, are much different, because they focus on two other parts of Ovid's narrative, namely part 13, i.e. *the sexual harassment* – when the nymph attacks the nude boy, catches or embraces him, and tries to rape him – and on the voyeuristic scene (part 10) with the nymph gazing at the nude boy [cf. below, Figs. 3.16, 3.20A, 3.28A–E and 3.29]. One of the first Renaissance representations of the myth is the beautiful panel, a true *Kabinetstück*, painted by Jan Gossaert ca. 1517 for Philip of Burgundy, then prince-bishop of Utrecht, now in the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen in Rotterdam [Fig. 3.9].<sup>92</sup> The painting emphasises the aggressive behaviour with which the nymph attacks Hermaphroditus. The same goes for Giulio Romano's medallion fresco in the Villa Madama, painted 1520–1523 for Cardinal Giulio de' Medici;<sup>93</sup> the oil painting by Ippolito Scarsella of Ferrara, called *il Scarsellino* (1551–1620), made between 1580 and 1595, now in the Villa Borghese [cf. below Fig. 3.12A];<sup>94</sup> the woodcut by Pieter van der Borch, made for Moretus's *Metamorphoses* abridgement of 1591 [cf. below Fig. 3.12B];<sup>95</sup> the panel painted between 1606 and 1613 by the Flemish painter Louis Finson of Brugge (ca. 1578–1617) [cf. below Fig. 3.14],

90 *Ovide Moralisé*, Rouen, Bibliothèque Municipale, MS. o.4 (1044), fol. 102v. Cf. Lord, "Three Manuscripts".

91 MS. 5069 réserve, fol. 47v.

92 For a detailed discussion and literature on the painting, see below, section "Erotic Seduction through Art, and Moral Interpretation".

93 Cf. the sketch for the Giulio Romano's *Salmacis and Hermaphroditus*, a pen drawing, made in 1520 by one of Raphael's pupils, possibly Baldassare Peruzzi, 17,8 × 22,4 cm, Paris, Louvre, Cabinet des Dessins; for the attribution to Peruzzi cf. Frommel C.L., *Baldassare Peruzzi als Maler und Zeichner* (Vienna: 1967) 101–104. For Giulio Romano's fresco cf. Cieri Via C., *L'Arte delle Metamorfosi. Decorazioni mitologiche nel Cinquecento* (Rome: 2003) 303–307. For the construction of the Villa Madama cf. Napoleone C. (ed.), *Villa Madama, Il sogno di Raffaello* (Turin: 2007).

94 Oil on panel, 41,5 × 56 cm. Cf. Cieri V. (ed.), *Immagini degli dei. Mitologia e collezionismo fra '500 e '600* (Milano: 1996) 196–197.

95 Ovidius Naso, *Metamorphoses, argumentis brevioribus ex Luctatio grammatico collectis expositae, una cum vivis singularum Transformationum iconibus in aes incisus* (Antwerp, Joannes Moretus: 1591).



FIGURE 3.9 *Jan Gossaert, Salmacis and Hermaphroditus, ca. 1517. Oil on panel, 32,5 × 21 cm. Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam / Photographer: Studio Tromp, Rotterdam.*

who worked in Naples and Rome and was much influenced by Caravaggio;<sup>96</sup> the etching by Magdalena van de Passe from 1623 [Fig. 3.6], after a painting by Jacob Pynas (1592–1650), made 1605–1608 in Rome;<sup>97</sup> the etching from around 1626 by Moses van Uyttenbroeck (1600–1646), who worked in The Hague; and the oil painting by the Utrecht artist Paulus Moreelse (1571–1638) from 1627 [cf. below Fig. 3.15 A and B].<sup>98</sup> It also goes for a number of oil paintings by the Bolognese painter Francesco Albani (1578–1660), such as the large canvas painting in the Galleria Sabauda in Torino (ca. 1645) [Fig. 3.10A],<sup>99</sup> a smaller copy of this work (probably made by Albani's studio) auctioned in 2007 in Vienna by Dorotheum,<sup>100</sup> and an oval copy with the central image only, auctioned in 2016 by Sotheby's,<sup>101</sup> furthermore, there is a variation of the large Sabauda canvas preserved in the same gallery (ca. 1645) [Fig. 3.10B],<sup>102</sup> and a direct copy of this variation, probably made by Albani's workshop, in the Landesmuseum für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte Oldenburg,<sup>103</sup> and there are other copies made by Albani himself,<sup>104</sup> his workshop, or his followers.<sup>105</sup> The

96 Cf. Capitelli G., *Louis Finson: Business and Painting* (Rome: 2014).

97 This painting, which is now lost, was a copy or version of Carlo Saraceni's *Landscape with Salmacis and Hermaphroditus*, see below.

98 For a discussion of the painting, see below, section "Erotic Seduction through Art, and Moral Interpretation".

99 Francesco Albani, *Salmacis and Hermaphroditus*, ca. 1645. Oil on canvas, 184 × 213 cm; Torino, Galleria Sabauda, inv. No. 498. [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Francesco\\_Alban\\_i\\_-\\_Salmacis\\_e\\_Hermaphroditus.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Francesco_Alban_i_-_Salmacis_e_Hermaphroditus.jpg).

100 School of Francesco Albani, *Salmacis and Hermaphroditus*, <http://www.artvalue.fr/auctionresult--ecole-de-albani-francesco-l-al-salmacis-und-hermaphroditus-1695491.htm>.

101 <http://www.sothebys.com/content/sothebys/fr/auctions/ecatalogue/2016/of-royal-and-noble-descent-l6306/lot.165.html>; C. Puglisi, *Francesco Albani*, New Haven and London 1998, p. 198, cat. no. 120.V.a (studio of Francesco Albani?).

102 Francesco Albani, *Salmacis and Hermaphroditus*, ca. 1645–1650. Oil on canvas, 60 × 74 cm, Torino, Galleria Sabauda, inv. no. 492.

103 Landesmuseum für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte of Oldenburg (inv. no. 15.593): Oil on canvas, 61 × 74 cm. Cf. the description by Bettina Welzin: [http://www.nwzonline.de/kultur/juengling-trifft-erfahrene-frau\\_a\\_5,1,1374303668.html](http://www.nwzonline.de/kultur/juengling-trifft-erfahrene-frau_a_5,1,1374303668.html).

104 Cf. e.g. the one of the Collection Liechtenstein: *Description des tableaux et de pièces des sculptures [...]* (Vienna: 1780), inv. no. 761 (according to the catalogue it was painted by Albani himself).

105 Albani's representations of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus are the topic of the thesis by Desvignes C., *Le mythe de Salmacis et Hermaphrodite et sa représentation par Francesco Albani* (unpublished thesis Lyons, Université Lumière, supervised by Guillaume Cassegrain, 103 pp., 2006). In the preparation of this contribution I had no access to this thesis.





FIGURE 3.10A *Francesco Albani, Salmacis and Hermaphroditus, ca. 1645. Oil on canvas, 184 × 213 cm. Turino, Galleria Sabauda, inv. no. 498*  
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Francesco\\_Al bani\\_-\\_Salmaci\\_e\\_Ermafrodito](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Francesco_Al bani_-_Salmaci_e_Ermafrodito).



FIGURE 3.10B *Francesco Albani, Salmacis and Hermaphroditus, ca. 1645–1650. Oil on canvas, 60 × 74 cm. Turino, Galleria Sabauda.*

emphasis on the nymph's aggressive behaviour is also true for the etching by the Strasbourg painter and engraver Johann Wilhelm Baur (1607–1642), made ca. 1639 in Vienna<sup>106</sup> [cf. below Fig. 3.17]; the etching by the French cleric, translator, and engraver Michel de Marolles (1600–1681), abbot of Villeloin, published in his *Temple de Muses* (1655) [cf. below Fig. 3.18],<sup>107</sup> which was copied in 1733 by the French printmaker Bernard Picart (1673–1733) and published in Amsterdam,<sup>108</sup> and the etchings by Johann Ulrich Krauß (1690), and Sandrart (1698). But actually, there are many more.

All these depictions share a remarkable interest in:

- (a) male and female nudity
- (b) the emphasis on the erotic in Ovid's depiction of classical mythology, and
- (c) the inversion of "normal" gendered behaviour (as in Ovid's narrative of the Salmacis nymph).

With respect to (a) one must take into account that in itself, it was not necessary to depict Salmacis and Hermaphroditus as nudes. In Ovid's description they are both dressed: Hermaphroditus takes off his clothes only in part 10

106 For Baur and his images to the *Metamorphoses* cf. Stachel E., *Johann Wilhelm Baur – seine Illustrationsserie zu den Metamorphosen des Ovid* (Diplomarbeit der Univ. Wien: 2013; unpublished); Bonnefoit R., *Johann Wilhelm Baur (1607–1642). Ein Wegbereiter der barocken Kunst in Deutschland* (Tübingen-Berlin: 1997); Borries J.E. von, "Johann Wilhelm Baur (1607–1642). Umrisse seines Lebens und Werks", in Schlink – Sperlich (eds.), *Forma et subtilitas. Festschrift für Wolfgang Schöne zum 75. Geburtstag* (Berlin: 1986) 130–144.

107 Michel de Marolles, *Tableaux du temple des muses tirez du cabinet de feu Mr Favereau, et gravez en tailles-douces par les meilleurs maîtres de son temps pour représenter les vertus et les vices, sur les plus illustres fables de l'antiquité, avec les descriptions, remarques et annotations* (Paris: 1655; also printed, partly in different sizes, in 1663, 1666, 1676, 1733, 1742, 1749, 1768, and 1769). The engraving was taken from the edition (Paris: 1663) 244. For De Marolles cf. Bossebœuf L., *Un Précurseur: Michel de Marolles, abbé de Villeloin, sa vie et son œuvre* (Tours: 1911) (reprint Geneva: 1971); and Bernard J., "Portrait d'un honnête homme, Michel de Marolles, abbé de Villeloin", in *Les Amis du Pays Lochois* 12 (December 1996) 73–98.

108 Picart was first active in Paris, but he moved to Amsterdam in 1708. The Salmacis etching (25,3 × 17,8 cm) was published in: Beaumarchais Antoine de La Barre de, *Le Temple des Muses, orné de 60 tableaux où sont représentés les événements les plus remarquables de l'antiquité fabuleuse* (Amsterdam, Zacharias Chatelain 11: 1733), *Tempel der Zanggodinnen, vertoond in LX heerlyke Kunststukken, behelzende alle voornaemste Geschiedenissen van de Fabel-Oudheid. Getekend en in 't koper gebragt door Bernard Picart Le Romain* [...] (ibidem, idem: 1733), p. 71. For the image cf. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (no. RP-P-1938-730), public domain, URL: <http://hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.302884>.

of the narrative, and Salmacis hers only in part 13. It is remarkable, however, that almost all early modern artists preferred to depict the protagonists as *nudes* – actually, one may say *as nude as possible* – and this starts from the first paintings on: Gossaert's panel from around 1517 [Fig. 3.9] and Giulio Romano's medallion fresco in the Villa Madama (painted 1520–1523). Interestingly, in Ovid's account the pool is quite deep, at least deep enough for one to be able to swim in it; Salmacis even jumps from the bank directly into the middle of the pool.<sup>109</sup> In the early modern depictions, however, the water is often rendered as being very shallow. In the paintings by Giulio Romano, Gossaert [Fig. 3.9], Finson [cf. below Fig. 3.14], Ludovico Carracci [cf. below Fig. 3.28A], and Paolo de Matteis (1662–1728; painting made for the duke of Orléans between 1702 and 1705) [cf. below Fig. 3.19],<sup>110</sup> and furthermore in Magdalena van de Passe's etching [Fig. 3.6], it is only some 20 cm deep, or even less. The reason for this change with respect to Ovid's account is, I suppose, the wish to show as much of the naked bodies as possible. This strengthened early modern interest in the nude is a complex phenomenon. Among other things, it has to do with humanism and antiquarianism, the cultural and social prestige created through the revival of classical antiquity, and artistic emulation.<sup>111</sup>

### The Rape of the Male by the Woman

The above-mentioned artists chose to depict the inversion of normal gendered behaviour in its most extreme form, i.e. the rape of the male by the woman. In doing so, they turned around the usual rape pattern of the *Metamorphoses*, as appears, for example, in the story of Apollo and Daphne [Fig. 3.11]. In order to demonstrate this in a convincing way, they partly followed Ovid's description and partly applied specific pictorial devices that display aspects not mentioned by Ovid. In all of the above-mentioned depictions, the nymph appears as the aggressor, the male as the victim. In a number of representations, the

109 *Metamorphoses* IV, 357.

110 For Paolo de Matteis's painting, which is now lost and survives only in an etching, see below.

111 For the interest in the nude in 16th- and 17th-century Dutch painting cf. De Clipper K. – Van Cauterén K. – Stighelen K. van der (eds.), *The Nude and the Norm in the Early Modern Low Countries* (Turnhout: 2011); Sluijter, "Prestige and Emulation" passim; idem, "Emulating Sensuous Beauty: Representations of Danaë from Gossaert to Rembrandt", *Simiolus* 27 (1999) 4–45; for Jan Gossaert's emphasis on the nude cf. Schrader S., "Gossart's Mythological Nudes and the Shaping of Philip of Burgundy's Erotic Identity", in Ainsworth et alii (eds.), *Jan Gossart's Renaissance* 57–68; and Bass A.M., *Jan Gossart and the Invention of Netherlandish Antiquity* (Princeton U.P.: 2016) passim.



FIGURE 3.11 *Francesco Albani, Apollo and Daphne, ca. 1615–1620. Oil on copper mounted on panel, 17,5 × 35 cm. Paris, Louvre. Wikimedia commons.*

nymph throws herself on her victim, as one can see, for example, in the paintings by Giulio Romano, Scarsellino [Fig. 3.12A], Carlo Saraceni (made in Rome between 1598 and 1608),<sup>112</sup> Finson [Fig. 3.14], Francesco Albani [Figs. 3.10A, 3.10B, and 3.13], and Moreelse [Fig. 3.15B], the woodcut by Pieter van der Borcht [Fig. 3.12B], and the etchings by Moses van Uyttenbroeck, Baur [Fig. 3.17], De Marolles [Fig. 3.18], and Sandrart.

In these cases, the nymph shows her aggressive intentions through her body language, e.g. by opening her arms in order to catch her victim, as one can see in the same depictions. The last one is purely a pictorial device, not mentioned in Ovid. In other pictorial representations, the nymph has already caught her

112 *Landscape with Salmacis and Hermaphroditus*, oil on copperplate, 40 × 52,5 cm, Museo di Capodimonte (inv. no. C 448). Saraceni painted it during his stay in Rome (1598–1608), together with four other scenes from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (all in the Museo di Capodimonte). Saraceni's painting must have been made in Rome before the Dutch painter Jacob Pynas, who also stayed in the city (from 1605 on), returned to his homeland (1608). Pynas made a version of Saraceni's *Landscape with Salmacis and Hermaphroditus* during his stay in Rome (probably on a wooden panel), which he took with him to the Low Countries. This painting is lost now, but a copy of it is preserved through the etching by Magdalena van de Passe from 1623. Saraceni composed his mythological scenes as small but attractive and elaborate landscapes, and in his landscape compositions he was influenced by Adam Elsheimer, who stayed in Rome during the same period. For Saraceni's similar Ovidian landscape copperplate paintings *The Flight of Icarus* and *Ariadne Abandoned by Theseus* cf. *The Age of Caravaggio*, exhibition catalogue, New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York: 1985) 192–193.



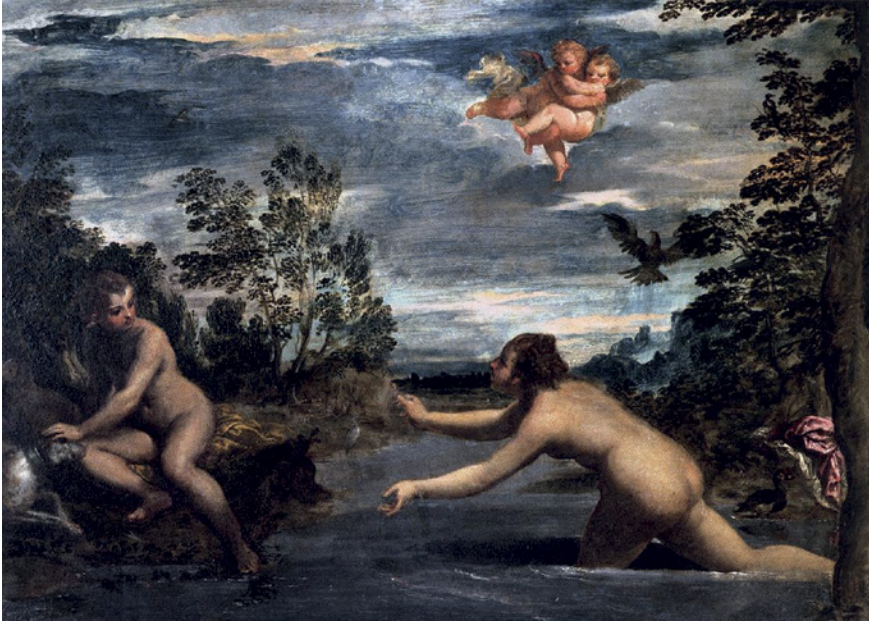


FIGURE 3.12A *Scarsellino, Salmacis and Hermaphroditus, between 1580 and 1595. Oil on panel, 41,5 × 56 cm. Rome, Galleria Borghese. Wikimedia public domain.*



FIGURE 3.12B *Salmacis and Hermaphroditus. Woodcut by Pieter van der Borcht to Ovid, Metamorphoses [...] (Antwerp, Joannes Moretus: 1591).*



FIGURE 3.13A *Luigi Bridi, copperplate etching (1840) of Albani's smaller Salmacis-painting in the Galleria Sabauda, 24 × 30 cm.*



FIGURE 3.13B *Francesco Albani, Salmacis and Hermaphroditus. Etching by Colinet of Albani's oval oil painting, owned by Philippe II, duke of Orléans (Paris, Palais Royale), now apparently lost. From: Galerie du Palais royal [...] (Paris, Jacques Couché: 1786–1808).*





FIGURE 3.14 *Louis Finson of Brugge, Salmacis and Hermaphroditus, ca. 1600. Oil on panel, 50,5 × 71 cm. Auctioned 2013.*



FIGURE 3.15A *Paulus Moreelse, Personification of Lascivia, signed and dated 1627. Oil on canvas, 100,4 × 82,2 cm. Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum. Wikimedia commons.*



FIGURE 3.15B Detail of Fig. 3.15A, the "painting in the painting": Salmacis and Hermaphroditus.

prey, such as in the woodcut accompanying Aneau's *Picta poesis* (possibly invented by Bernard Salomon) [Fig. 3.2], the etching by Magdalena van de Passe [Fig. 3.6] and its example, a painting by Jacob Pynas (now lost), which was itself a copy or version of the copperplate painting by the Venetian painter Carlo Saraceni (1579–1620), made in Rome between 1598 and 1608 (now in the Museo di Capodimonte in Naples). In a number of cases the nymph appears to be bigger than Hermaphroditus, as in the depictions by Spranger [cf. below, Fig. 3.20A], Scarsellino [Fig. 3.12A], Ludovico Carracci [cf. below Fig. 3.28A], Francesco Albani [Fig. 3.10A and below, Fig. 3.28C], Moses van Uytenbroeck [the painting; Fig. 3.16], Baur [Fig. 3.17], De Marolles [Fig. 3.18; cf. also Picart's copy], and Sandrart. This is again a specifically pictorial device. Ovid did not talk about the size of his protagonists.

In some representations the nymph has a determined and focused, even slightly cruel gaze toward the boy, as a hunter would look at his prey: this is the case in the depictions by Gossaert [Fig. 3.9], Finson [Fig. 3.15], Francesco Albani [Figs. 3.10A, 3.13A, cf. also below 3.28B and 3.28C], Ludovico Carracci [cf. below Fig. 3.28A], Paolo de Matteis [cf. below Fig. 3.19], Samuel van Hoogstraten [cf. below Fig. 3.28D], Michel de Marolles [Fig. 3.18], Krauß, and Sandrart. In the case of the paintings by Finson [Fig. 3.14], Ludovico Carracci [cf. below Fig. 3.28A], and Francesco Albani [cf. below Fig. 3.28B and C] the





FIGURE 3.16 *Moses van Uyttenbroeck, Salmacis and Hermaphroditus, 1627. Oil on panel, 43 × 66 cm. The Hague, Mauritshuis.*

nymph's focused "hunting" gaze is reinforced by the movements of her arms – they open up because she is about to catch her prey. Ovid, in comparison, talks about the nymph's glance only in terms of the sparkling fire of passionate love, which he compares to the reflections of sunrays in a glass.<sup>113</sup> In Gossaert's and Finson's paintings, for example, Salmacis's eyes are not sparkling or shining: they are cold, determined, focused, and radiate aggression.

In a number of examples, the artists also emphasise the forceful rapidity of the nymph's attack. They achieve this impression through rendering her body in movement as much as possible. The paintings by Scarsellino [Fig. 3.12A] and Carracci [cf. below Fig. 3.28A] are wonderful examples. Carracci construes a complex and dynamic posture of the body, which in fact unites various movements. The nymph who was hiding behind a bush leaves her hiding spot by pushing aside a branch with her left hand, while at the same time she is supporting herself with her right hand on the border of the pool in order to jump on poor Hermaphroditus. Her whole body is in full tension: the upper part

113 Ovid, *Metamorphoses* IV, 346–349, transl. Miller: 'Then was the nymph [...] spellbound, and her love kindled as she gazed at the naked form. Her eyes shone bright as when the sun's dazzling face is reflected from the surface of a glass held opposite his rays'.

is bent forward, showing that she is about to jump; her legs are cocked; with the right leg she stands on her toes, which is expressing that she is about to jump right now. In Scarsellino's painting the nymph has already jumped into the water: the force of her attack is expressed through the extreme, horizontal movement of her body. De Marolles may have copied this idea, while he made – so it seems – the nymph attacking and catching her prey almost simultaneously [Fig. 3.18]. Moreelse evokes in his “painting in the painting” a similar impression, but he locates the nymph's successful attack outside the pool [Fig. 3.15B]. In Baur's etching Salmacis is in full movement: she sprints at full speed and with all her power in the direction of her victim; only her left foot touches the ground [Fig. 3.17]. This is also true for Finson's Salmacis: she, too, is running and touches the ground with only her left foot, but she has almost caught her prey [Fig. 3.14]. Pieter van der Borcht unites the attack and its result: he renders the nymph with a horizontal movement of the body at the moment when she has already flung her arms around her victim [Fig. 3.12B]. The same impression may be achieved by depicting the nymph's loose, flying hair with horizontal strokes; compare, for example, the representations by De Marolles [Fig. 3.18], and, in its most extreme form, by Jacob Pynas, in the etching by Magdalena van de Passe [Fig. 3.6]. In Van de Passe's engraving, the horizontality of the hair is styled in such an unnatural manner that it reminds one of art nouveau. This is again not based on Ovid's text, but a purely pictorial device applied in order to emphasise the inversion of gendered behaviour.

The boy, on the other hand, is characterised by female features. In accordance with Ovid's description, the majority of the painters depict him with white skin. Some artists equip him with other female features not mentioned by Ovid – for example, Pieter van der Borcht gives him a female figure with big round buttocks [Fig. 3.12B]: as one can see, there is practically no difference between the nymph and the man. The parallel postures of their bodies reinforce this impression. Scarsellino [Fig. 3.12A] depicts Hermaphroditus as a very young boy with hips and a round bottom; Paolo de Matteis – in the painting he made for Philippe II, duke of Orléans (between 1702 and 1705), which had been exhibited as part of the famous Orleans collection in the Palais Royale in Paris [Fig. 3.19] – gave the boy a feminine breast.<sup>114</sup> Daniel Vertangen

114 The gallery of Philippe II, duke of Orléans (1674–1723), son of Philippe I, the brother of the French King Louis XIV, comprised about 500 paintings and was one of the most important painting collections of his time. It was brought together between 1701 and 1723, especially in the duke's last years, from 1715 on. The collection was housed in Philippe's palace, the Palais Royale in Paris. The collection was sold during the French Revolution, but luckily



FIGURE 3.17 *Johann Wilhelm Baur; Salmacis and Hermaphroditus (made ca. 1639). Etching 13,2 × 20,7 cm (detail). No. 40 of Baur's Metamorphoses illustrations, Ovids Verwandlungen in 150 Kupfern dargestellt (Vienna: 1639), fol. 38r; BSB urn:nbn:de:bvb:12-bsb10872073-4.*





FIGURE 3.18 *Michel de Marolles, Salmacis and Hermaphroditus. Etching taken from: idem, Tableaux du temple des muses tirés du cabinet de feu Mr Favereau, et gravés en tailles-douces par les meilleurs maîtres de son temps pour représenter les vertus et les vices, sur les plus illustres fables de l'antiquité, avec les descriptions, remarques et annotations (Paris: 1663) 244.*

FIGURE 3.19

*Paolo de Matteis, Salmacis and Hermaphroditus. Engraving after a painting by Paolo de Matteis. Oil on canvas, ca. 162 × 212 cm, engraved by Antoine Louis Romanet (1742–180), after a design by Antoine Borel (1743–1810), Paris [1786–1808], 15,7 × 20,6 cm. From: Galerie du Palais royal, gravée d'après les Tableaux des différentes Ecoles qui la composent: avec un abrégé de la vie des peintres et une description historique de chaque tableau, par Mr. l'abbé de Fontenai. Dédiée à S. A. Monseigneur le duc d'Orléans, premier prince du sang, par Jacques Couché, 3 vols. (Paris, Jacques Couché: 1786–1808).*



(ca. 1598–ca. 1683) also equipped Hermaphroditus in his painting (made in the middle of the 17th century) with a kind of female breast and round hips [cf. below Fig. 3.28F]. Francesco Albani in his two paintings in the Galleria Sabauda [Fig. 3.10A and B], De Matteis [Fig. 3.19], and Vertangen gave Hermaphroditus also a female face. The special humour of Albani's large painting in the Galleria Sabauda is that the boy and the nymph have exactly the same face [Fig. 3.10A].

In most representations, the boy tries to escape in a clumsy and ineffective way, which again gives a kind of female impression. In the depictions by Gossaert [Fig. 3.9], Pieter van der Borcht [Fig. 3.12B], Finson [Fig. 3.14], Albani [Fig. 3.13A], Baur [Fig. 3.17], De Matteis [Fig. 3.19], De Marolles [Fig. 3.18], and Sandrart, the boy raises his hands (or one hand), an expression of either fear or a lack of capability to defend himself effectively. In comparison, Ovid told us nothing about the boy making feminine movements when he defended himself. Rather, he makes clear that the nymph is unable to win the fight, and this is exactly why she prays to the gods to unite them. In this respect, most artists changed Ovid's narrative. Another pictorial device used to emphasise the inversion of gender is that Hermaphroditus is adorned with long, curly, mostly blond hair: this is the case in depictions by, among others, Giulio Romano (1520/3), Gossaert [Fig. 3.9], De Marolles [Fig. 3.18], De Matteis [Fig. 3.19], Francesco Albani [Figs. 3.10A–B; cf. also below 3.28B–C], Moreelse [Fig. 3.15B], Hoogstraten [cf. below Fig. 3.28D], Vertangen [cf. below Fig. 3.28E],

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a lavish catalogue, containing the engravings and precise descriptions of 352 paintings, was made between 1786 and 1808: *Galerie du Palais royal, gravée d'après les Tableaux des différentes Ecoles qui la composent: avec un abrégé de la vie des peintres et une description historique de chaque tableau, par Mr. l'abbé de Fontenai Dediée à S. A. S. Monseigneur le duc d'Orléans, premier prince du sang, par Jacques Couché*, 3 vols. (Paris, Jacques Couché: 1786–1808). This catalogue went back to a former catalogue without illustrations, made in 1727: Louis-François Dubois de Saint-Gelais, *Description des tableaux du Palais Royal avec la vie des peintres à la tête de leurs ouvrages* (Paris: 1727; reprint ibidem: 1737; digitally accessible [https://books.google.fr/books?id=MtU9AAAAcAAJ&printsec=frontcover&hl=de&source=gbs\\_ge\\_summary\\_r&cad=o#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.fr/books?id=MtU9AAAAcAAJ&printsec=frontcover&hl=de&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=o#v=onepage&q&f=false)). In the catalogue of 1727/1737 the painting is described on page 362 as 'Paul Matthé, *La Fable de Salmacis*'. The engraving of Paolo de Matteis's painting was made for the catalogue of 1786–1808 by Antoine Louis Romanet (1742–1810), after a design by Antoine Borel (1743–1810). The *Salmacis et Hermaphrodite* was the only painting of Paolo de Matteis owned by Philippe II (cf. in this catalogue: 'Monsieur Le Duc d'Orléans ne possède qu'un seul tableau de ce maître'). He must have ordered it during the years 1702 and 1705, when Paolo de Matteis stayed in France at the court of his cousin, the Dauphin Louis de Bourbon. For Paolo de Matteis's life and works cf. Santucci P., art. "Paolo de Matteis", in *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani* 38 (1990): [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/paolo-de-matteis\\_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/paolo-de-matteis_(Dizionario-Biografico)), and Thieme U. – Becker F., *Künstlerlexikon*, vol. XXIV, 252ff.

and Bernard Picart (1708) [cf. below Fig. 3.28F]. In Ovid, we get no information about the length or colour of Hermaphroditus's hair.

### Art Lovers and the Early Modern Interest in the Erotic

Our analysis has brought to the fore the maybe slightly surprising result that the majority of the early modern artists who depicted this myth apparently shared Ovid's interest in the erotic and in the inversion of gender: as we have seen, they invented a number of new pictorial devices to order to emphasise these aspects. From the early 16th century on, there were connoisseurs and refined art collectors in Italy and elsewhere with a vivid aesthetic interest in classical mythology, representations of nude, erotic scenes, and humanist antiquarianism. Princely courts were centres of patronage that favoured such topics. It was probably no coincidence that the first Salmacis painting, Gossaert's [Fig. 3.9], was ordered by such a patron, Philip of Burgundy, who was also a lover of humanism and *Maecenas* of scholars such as Erasmus and Geldenhouwer. The Salmacis painting belongs to a number of mythological paintings Philip ordered.<sup>115</sup> Gossaert also painted for him another nude couple from the *Metamorphoses*, Hercules and Deianira, in 1517.<sup>116</sup>

Interest in the nude and the erotic certainly played a major part in the painting by Bartholomäus Spranger (1546–1611), which he made ca. 1580–1582 for the Kunstkammer of Emperor Rudolph II (now in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna) [Fig. 3.20A].<sup>117</sup> Spranger focuses on the voyeuristic scene, i.e. part 10

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- 115 For Gossaert's mythological nudes as paintings for his noble patrons cf. Ainsworth M.W. (ed.), *Man, Myth, and Sensual Pleasures: Jan Gossart's Renaissance*, ed., exh. cat. (New York – New Haven – London, Yale U.P. Press: 2010) 375–377, no. 98; Schrader, S. "Gossaert's Neptune and Amphitrite and the Body of the Patron", in *Body and Embodiment in Netherlandish Art, Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 58 (2008) 40–57; eadem, "Gossart's Mythological Nudes and the Shaping of Philip of Burgundy's Erotic Identity", in Ainsworth et alii (eds.), *Jan Gossart's Renaissance* 57–68; Sluijter E.J. "Emulating Sensuous Beauty: Representations of Danaë from Gossaert to Rembrandt", *Simiolus* 27 (1999) 4–45, and idem, "Prestige and Emulation" 35–38. For antiquarian aspects of Gossaert's nudes see the recent study by Marisa Bass, *Jan Gossart and the Invention of Netherlandish Antiquity* (Princeton U.P.: 2016).
- 116 Oil on panel, 37 × 27 cm, 1517, Barber Institute for Fine Arts, Univ. of Birmingham (inv. No. 46.10). On this panel cf. Bass M., "Gossaert's Neptune and Amphitrite Reconsidered", *Simiolus* 35 (2011) 61–83.
- 117 Oil on canvas, 110 × 81 cm, no. GG 4614. Cf. Metzler S., *Bartholomeus Spranger: Splendour and Eroticism in Imperial Prague. The Complete Works, Exhibition in The Metropolitan*



of Ovid's story, and he elaborates on it in a very sophisticated composition: he transforms Ovid's message that the boy 'then quickly [...] threw aside the thin garments from his slender form' before jumping into the water not only into a delicate "striptease" by Hermaphroditus, but into an even more erotic *dual striptease*: not only the boy but also the nymph takes off her clothes in a seductive way.

In a marked difference from Ovid, there is nothing 'quick' or fast in the boy's movements; on the contrary, he is sitting half-naked on a stone in the middle of the pool, in the posture of the statue of the thorn-puller of the Capitoline museum; a small strip of his translucent clothing is still hanging over his left shoulder, and over his right arm and leg. It just covers his genitals; the rest of his body is naked. It does not look at all as if the boy is going to start 'throwing' off his clothes in the next second or so; instead, he seems to be occupied a bit thoughtlessly with his left leg, maybe putting some water on it; anyway, he repeats the static gesture of the thorn-puller. Meanwhile, Salmacis and the viewer (!) are allowed to watch his beautiful white body, splendid as a marble stature.

Salmacis too, is not engaging in a quick movement: her beautiful body is shown in a serpentine posture, like that of Giambologna's (1524–1608) Venus statues of the 1570s.<sup>118</sup> Instead of, as in Ovid, 'throwing far away all her clothes' and 'jumping into the middle of the pool',<sup>119</sup> she lingers at the shore of the pool and strips off her clothes slowly and seductively. Her body language is a work of art in itself. The delicate serpentine posture seems to express the emotional process of "falling in love": her body seems to "melt down" as she watches the beautiful, naked body of the boy. It looks like she is so occupied with her emotions that she forgets what her hands are actually doing. With her left hand she is slowly lifting up her clothing, while at the same time, with her right hand she is trying to loosen the sandal on her left foot.

It is important to note that this is not a natural posture, but a thoroughly artificial one. If one tried to imitate it, one would likely not succeed, but would instead fall down. The artificial posture is the result of a passionate *paragone*

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*Museum of Art, New York* (Yale U.P., New Haven – London: 2014) 98, catalogue no. 27; Konecny L., "Sources and Significance of two Mythological Paintings by Bartholomaeus Spranger", *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen in Wien* 85–86 (1989–1990) 49–50; and Hauser, *Il manierismo: la crisi del rinascimento e l'origine dell'arte moderna* (Torino: 1964) 234–235.

118 Cf. below.

119 *Metamorphoses* IV, 356–357: '[...] omni/ veste procul iacta mediis immititur undis'. Translation mine.



FIGURE 3.20A *Bartholomäus Spranger, Salmacis and Hermaphroditus, made 1580–1582 for the Kunstkammer of Emperor Rudolph II. Oil on canvas, 110 × 81 cm. Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum.*



FIGURE 3.20B *Giambologna, Bathing Venus, ca. 1573. Marble statue, 130 cm. Florence, Boboli Gardens, Grotta del Buontalenti. Wikimedia commons.*

Spranger engages with Giambologna and his famous Venuses, the marble *Bathing Venus* in the Boboli Gardens (in the Grotta del Buontalenti, ca. 1573) [Fig. 3.20B], or his so-called *Venus Urania*, a small bronze statue which is in fact a variation of the Florentine *Bathing Venus*. Rudolph II surely would have recognised Spranger's *paragone*, because he kept Giambologna's *Venus Urania* (made ca. 1575) in his *Kunstkammer*.<sup>120</sup>

Giambologna's admirable mastership consisted of complicated *figura serpentinata* compositions, with extreme twistings and turnings of the nude body. For example, his *Bathing Venus* turns her head around, in fact contrary to the turning movement of the upper part of her body and that of her arms [Fig. 3.20B]. Spranger surpasses his composition through an "over-turn", i.e. through construing the movements of Salmacis's body completely as a spiral: with her hips she turns to the left, but with the upper part of her body she turns to the left, while her right arm turns back and downwards and to the right, but her left arm goes in a circular movement upwards and to the right so that her left palm comes close to her face [Fig. 3.20A]. Spranger invented a stunning statue, and moreover, he presented it in a painting. Also, through this device Spranger demonstrated that painting is superior to sculpture. Painting is able to depict sculpture, but sculpture is not able to render a painting. Furthermore, Spranger has succeeded in uniting two famous sculptures – the thorn-puller and Giambologna's Venus – in *one* single painting, and to combine them in a most sophisticated way: he depicted them both not only as "turning images", but made them also turn in opposite directions. Moreover, he demonstrated that painting is able to achieve much more than sculpture because it is much better at expressing emotions and sexual seduction. We have here a true miracle of art, an impressive *Kunstkammer* piece, made for the most sophisticated art lovers and connoisseurs of his day, such as the Holy Roman Emperor Rudolph II.

It is important to note that this deep interest in the discourse on the visual arts does not at all diminish or exclude a vivid interest in the erotic. Rather, the two are indissolubly intertwined. For example, it is a sophisticated artistic

120 Gilded bronze, 38,8 cm. Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum (inv. no. KK 5893). Cf. entry by Claudia Kryza-Gersch, in Haag S. – Kirchweyer F. (eds.), *Die Kunstkammer. Die Schätze der Habsburger* (2nd ed. Vienna: 2012) 208–209. Her attributes – prism, armillary sphere, ruler, compasses, and plumb line – characterise the statue as Venus Urania. Cf. the exhibition Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, *Giambologna – Triumph des Körpers. Eine Ausstellung des Kunsthistorischen Museums in Zusammenarbeit mit dem Museo Nazionale del Bargello Florenz*, zu sehen bis 17. September 2006 (Vienna: 2006); Leinz G. – Bredekamp H., *Die Beschwörung des Kosmos: Europäische Bronzen der Renaissance*, vol. 1 (Duisburg: 1994) 193.



device in Spranger's painting that the nymph's movement mirrors that of the boy: both touch their left foot with their right hand. That suggests that they are behaving in a simultaneous way, and it enhances the erotic tension of the image. The effect Spranger envisaged in his extraordinary composition is to create a kind of double erotic gaze: the viewer first gazes at the nymph's beautiful body,<sup>121</sup> and then, via the nymph, at the nude boy. In a sense, Spranger's painting seems to represent a kind of ingeniously construed 16th-century pornography: the viewer is invited to lustfully linger on both semi-nudes and to become a voyeur; and, most notably, that would work for all kinds of viewers – those with heterosexual, homosexual, or bisexual interests.

### Erotic Seduction through Art, and Moral Interpretation

On the other hand, the artful representation of the nude and the erotic does not exclude moral or allegorical interpretations: the artists were familiar with the connection of erotic scenes and moral interpretation, and they were well aware of the fact that a seductive depiction of nude bodies may even enhance the relevance of certain pieces of moral advice. The viewer may enjoy the erotic effects of beautiful bodies, and the aesthetic and artistic qualities of the paintings; but, nevertheless, he may 'read' them in a philosophical, moral, or even religious way. In the case of the Salmacis story, when looking at the seductive nudes, the viewer may identify the nymph with sensual and sexual seduction by women, worldly pleasures in general, lecherousness and lasciviousness, leisure, laziness, sloth, loss of virtue, coitus before marriage, prostitution, all kinds of forbidden hetero-, bi- and homosexual practices, and so on. As a type of method, the bad thing that the moral lesson forbids is often shown in all its glory in the painting.

Thus, one cannot exclude the idea that Spranger's highly erotic painting was interpreted in an allegorical sense too. Sally Metzler argued that the painting was meant as an alchemical allegory, namely of Michael Maier's double substance Rebis: 'Spranger has captured the moment before unification. The allegory of the myth, that of transformation, or transmutation, reveals itself in the work. Water represents the purification process as told in the alchymic process, while the Hermaphrodite is the Rebis, or double thing, a primary symbol in alchemy.'<sup>122</sup> Metzler's interpretation may seem attractive, since Rudolph

121 Metzler, *Bartholomeus Spranger: Splendour and Eroticism* 98, correctly remarks: 'Salmacis disrobes for Hermaphroditus, and for the viewer [...]'.  
 122 Metzler S., "Artists, Alchemists and Mannerists in Courtly Prague", in Wamberg J. (ed.), *Art and Alchemy* (Copenhagen: 2006) (129–148) here 132–134. Cf. also her *Bartholomeus*

was much interested in alchemy, but, nevertheless, it is highly speculative. In fact, there are no parts of the painting that clearly refer to alchemy. Also, the well-known alchemical symbol, i.e. the two-headed Hermaphroditus, does not appear in the painting.<sup>123</sup> In 1580–1582, the time when the painting was made, Michael Maier's Hermaphroditus = Rebis emblem did not yet exist (his emblem books appeared only in 1617 and 1618),<sup>124</sup> and Maier was not acquainted with Rudolph (this happened only in 1608). Although there was an alchemical tradition of the Hermaphrodite as a most valuable quintessence well before Maier,<sup>125</sup> I think it would be wise to take into account the focus of the painting, and this focus is clearly on sensual and sexual seduction, lust, and forbidden practices, such as voyeurism and homosexuality, and on the achievements of painting, especially in its *paragone* with sculpture and Giambologna's turning and twisting bodies. I suppose that such readings are more plausible, and they are also connected with the pictorial tradition. The first time the voyeuristic scene was depicted seems to be in Niccolò degli Agostini's *L'Ovidio Metamorphoseos* (1522). The allegorical explanation that accompanied this woodcut was the identification of Salmacis as a representation of man who fails in resisting sexual lust.<sup>126</sup> In such an interpretation, it would make perfect sense for Spranger to push the sensual seduction to a maximum, and moreover to double it. Another important thing is that Spranger identified Salmacis with Venus, the very personification of lust and sexual longing. In fact, Salmacis = Venus is the main character of the painting. She seduces the viewer either directly or indirectly. Also, the identification of Salmacis and Venus points to the direction that the painting should be understood as a warning against the seductive power of lust. Of course, Spranger's painting has no inscription, so we cannot be certain of the envisaged interpretation.

A telling example of how this would work, and how it was also envisaged by the artist, is Paulus Moreelse's (1571–1638) intriguing painting of 1627, now in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge [Fig. 3.21A].<sup>127</sup>

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*Spranger* (2014) 51: 'One of Spranger's most splendid allegories painted for Rudolf, *Hermaphroditus and the Nymph Salmacis*, illustrates an alchimic union.'

123 Cf. above.

124 Cf. above.

125 Cf. Aurnhammer A., "Zum Hermaphroditen in der Sinnbildkunst der Alchemisten"; idem, *Androgynie* 118–128; Biedermann, "Das Androgyn-Symbol in der Alchemie"; Hild, art. "Hermaphrodit"; Limbeck, "Bilder alchemistischer Hermaphroditen (15. Jahrhundert)".

126 *L'Ovidio Metamorphoseos composto per Nicolo Agustini* (Venice, Iacomo da Leco for Nicolo Zoppino and Vincentio di Pollo: 1522), fol. 39r: 'si po anchora [...] per Salmace dire che lhomo che ha poca renitentia presto se fa libidinoso'.

127 Oil on canvas, 100,4 × 82,2 cm. Signed and dated 1627. For Moreelse's painting cf. Spicer J.A. (ed.), *Masters of the Light: Dutch Paintings in Utrecht During the Golden Age*



FIGURE 3.21A *Paulus Moreelse, Personification of Lascivia, signed and dated 1627. Oil on canvas, 100,4 × 82,2 cm. Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum. Wikimedia commons.*

Moreelse here combines the Salmacis story (as a painting within the painting) with the depiction of a voluptuous young woman with a spectacular décolleté and one naked breast – a woman who resembles a courtesan or prostitute. On the wall hangs a painting with Salmacis trying to rape Hermaphroditus. Already this combination points to some of the current moral interpretations of the Salmacis story. Interestingly, the Utrecht nobleman, humanist, art lover, and antiquarian Aernout van Buchel (1565–1641) has left us an interpretation of Moreelse's painting, in an epigrammatic poem from 1627, in which it appears that he took the Salmacis myth as warning against sexual longing:

This is the symbol of the vain world, and the triumph of the flesh,/
 Where the rapacious demon lust holds sway,/
 And wealth is used to buy love, the diabolic furor to make love./
 Both are in a blind rage, both do not know measure./
 Let this be the antidote and cure for immoral sorrow:/
 Fasting, tears, or better: contrition over evil.<sup>128</sup>

Van Buchel's interpretation is in accordance with the one envisaged by the painter. In the painting a booklet lies open on the table [Fig. 3.21B], in which one can read the painter's interpretation: 'Non sibi, sed Veneri carnis Lascivia vivit./ Huic aurum et gemmas et bona cuncta sacrat' – 'Lascivia does not live for herself, but for Venus only./ To her she dedicates gold and jewels and all riches'. This is, in fact, identical to Van Buchel's 'wealth is used to buy love'.

Thus, as the inscription clearly shows, the young lady represents the personification of *Lascivia* or the Desire of the Flesh, and furthermore Moreelse identifies Salmacis with *Lascivia*. This is underpinned by a few pictorial details: first, *Lascivia's* hair is blonde, like the hair of Salmacis in the painting; second, *Lascivia* wears roses in her hair, similar to Salmacis, who was picking flowers to adorn her hair.<sup>129</sup> The riches mentioned in the booklet are also shown on the table: golden chains, pearls, and other jewellery. These are the presents the

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(San Francisco – Baltimore: 1994) 194; de Jongh E., *Tot lering en vermaak. Betekenissen van Hollandse genrevoorstellingen uit de zeventiende eeuw* (Amsterdam: 1976) 190 ff., [http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/jong076totl01\\_01/jong076totl01\\_01\\_0051.php](http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/jong076totl01_01/jong076totl01_01_0051.php); France Borel regards Moreelse's painting as an 'allegory of love', Louis Marin as 'Vanitas'; cf. Borel F., *Le peintre et son miroir [Regards indiscrets]* (Tournai: 2002); Marin L., "Les traverses de la vanité", in *Les Vanités de la peinture au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle* 21–30.

128 For the English translation see Fitzwilliam Museum, "Venus at the mirror or Allegory of vanity?" <http://www.pinpush.com/coverPortraits/moreelseVenus.htm> (with a few alterations).

129 Cf. above.



FIGURE 3.21B Detail of Fig. 3.21A (rotated 90° counterclockwise).  
Wikimedia commons.

girl received from her lovers. Thus, Moreelse presents the myth of Salmacis as a moral warning for men not to engage in love affairs; and, more specifically, not to spend their fortune on courtesans. The moral figure, the personification of *Lascivia*, which is identified by the booklet, goes back to Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia*, but more particularly it is a pictorial response to a work by Abraham Janssens van Nuyssen I (ca. 1575–1632), the *Lascivia*, from ca. 1618, auctioned at Christie's in 2011 [Fig. 3.22],<sup>130</sup> or another version of *Lascivia*, now in the Museum of Fine Arts in Brussels.<sup>131</sup> The young, naked woman depicted by Abraham Janssens is very seductive, but nevertheless the work comprises a moral warning, as one can see through the inscription the woman wears on her breast.

130 Oil on canvas, 118,2 × 98,4 cm; <http://www.christies.com/lotfinder/paintings/abraham-janssens-van-nuyssen-i-lascivia-5403431-details.aspx>.

131 Koninklijke Musea voor Schone Kunsten van België, no. 6592; Oil on canvas, 107,5 × 97 cm.





FIGURE 3.22 *Abraham Janssens van Nuyssen I, Personification of Lascivia, ca. 1618. Oil on canvas, 118,2 × 98,4 cm. Auctioned at Christie's in 2011. Wikimedia commons.*

Sometimes, the moral interpretation may be indicated exclusively by pictorial means. This seems to be the case with Finson's painting, auctioned in 2013 in Munich [Fig. 3.23].<sup>132</sup> The violent nymph, attacking from behind, is obviously meant to bring forth a frightening effect. This is mirrored in the face of the young man, which expresses fear. The viewer is invited to identify with the young man – and he is warned against the overwhelming power of lust, lecherousness, sensual pleasures, forbidden sexual practices, and so on. In this depiction of the myth, the expression of the emotion is crucial for the interpretation. Finson, as a close follower of Caravaggio, was very capable of producing such effects. If he is the creator of *Judith and Holofernes* [Fig. 3.24], which is ascribed to him,<sup>133</sup> he made a version of Caravaggio's painting, in which emotions play an important role;<sup>134</sup> Holofernes's face expresses horror and panic, and Judith's glance is determined and cruel, just like Salmacis's.

Let's return to Gossaert's intriguing Salmacis painting [Fig. 3.26B]. In a recent article, Matt Kavalier rightly highlighted Gossaert's capability to produce empathy by painting emotions, and, less plausibly, he also emphasised the erotic effects which the aggressive movements of the woman supposedly bring forth, which constitute – in Kavalier's eyes – an eroticism of violence, based on a kind of S&M tension.<sup>135</sup>

132 Oil on panel, 50,5 × 71 cm; <http://www.kettererkunst.com/details-e.php?obnr=113002166&anummer=412&detail=1>.

133 Collezione Intesa Sanpaolo. The painting was exhibited in 2013 in the Palazzo Zevalos Stigliano. Cf. Kobelt-Groch M., *Judith macht Geschichte. Zur Rezeption einer mythischen Gestalt vom 16. bis zum 19. Jahrhundert* (Munich: 2005) 243; and Lang W.K., *Grausame Bilder. Sadismus in der neapolitanischen Malerei von Caravaggio bis Giordano* (Berlin: 2001) 94–95.

134 Caravaggio, *Judith Beheading Holofernes*, ca. 1598, oil on canvas, 145 × 195 cm, Rome, Galleria Nazionale dell' Arte Antica.

135 Kavalier E.M., "Gossaert's Bodies and Empathy", *Journal of Historians of Netherlandish Art* 5, 2 (2013); digitally <http://www.jhna.org/index.php/past-issues/volume-5-issue-2-2013/196-gossarts-bodies-and-empathy>; for the painting cf. also Mensger A., *Jan Gossaert. Die niederländische Kunst zu Beginn der Neuzeit* (Berlin: 2012) 114–121; Ainsworth et alii (eds.), *Gossaert's Renaissance* 225–226; Lammertse F. (ed.), *Van Eyck to Breughel, 1400–1550. Dutch and Flemish Painting in the Collection of the Boymans-van Beuningen* (Rotterdam: 1994) 174–179; Eichberger D., *Leben mit Kunst, Wirken durch Kunst: Sammelwesen und Hofkunst unter Margarete von Österreich, Regentin der Niederlande* (Tournhout: 2002) 298–301; eadem – Bleyerveld Y. (eds.), *Women of Distinction. Margaret of York/ Margaret of Austria* (Louvain: 2005), no. 91, 252–253; Sluijter, "Prestige and Emulation" 35–38; and Bass M., *Jan Gossart and the Invention of Netherlandish Antiquity* (Princeton U.P.: 2016) 105–107.



FIGURE 3.23 *Louis Finson of Brugge, Salmacis and Hermaphroditus, ca. 1600. Oil on panel, 50,5 × 71 cm. Auctioned 2013.*

Philip of Burgundy, who served as bishop of Utrecht (1517–1524) and, prior to that, as Admiral of the Low Countries, was an important patron of artists, such as Jacopo de' Barbari and Jan Gossaert, and of humanists, such as Desiderius Erasmus and Gerard Geldenhouwer; he was also a passionate art lover, learned connoisseur, and even an amateur painter and goldsmith. Geldenhouwer emphasises in his biography of Philip that he conversed with the painters, sculptors, and architects in such an informal way that it looked like he was one of them.<sup>136</sup> Pope Julius II loved Philip because of his enormous knowledge of and expertise in the arts.<sup>137</sup> Thus, Philip surely admired Gossaert's artistic achievements in painting the nude,<sup>138</sup> but nevertheless he must have interpreted the painting allegorically.

<sup>136</sup> Geldenhouwer, *Vita clarissimi principis Philippi a Burgundia* [...], in: idem, *Collectanea*, ed. J. Prinsen (Amsterdam: 1901) 235: '[...] inter fabros architectos, sculptores et pictores versabatur adeo familiariter, ut unus illorum putaretur'.

<sup>137</sup> Ibidem 232.

<sup>138</sup> For Gossaert's achievements as painter of the nude cf. Silver L., "Figure nude, historie et poesie: Jan Gossaert and the Renaissance Nude in the Netherlands", *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 37 (1986) 1–40.





FIGURE 3.24 *Louis Finson of Brugge (?), Judith and Holofernes, Collezione Intesa Sanpaolo.*

This can be deduced from Margret of Austria's inventory of 1523/4,<sup>139</sup> to whom Philip gave the panel as a present: the relevant entry says that the painting originally had an inscription on its outer golden frame.<sup>140</sup> The inscription probably gave a short moral interpretation of the painting, in the form of a Latin epigram. In 1521 Gossaert made for the bishop another painting with a similar size and form, *Venus and Cupido*. This painting was adorned with a Latin epigram inscribed on its frame [Fig. 3.25]. Gossaert depicted Venus as a very seductive woman, in all her nudity; the inscription, however, comprises an attack against Cupido (lecherousness), warning him against outrageous behaviour.<sup>141</sup> Geldenhouwer tells us in his biography of Philip that he held in his service a couple of poets ('versificatores') whose task it was to compose epigrammatic poems for the paintings ('picturae') of his collection, and that the inscriptions were meant for learned interpretations of the paintings:

Aderant ei et versificatores, qui picturas atque structuram carminibus ornarent, ut utramque picturam et loquentem et tacitam ostentare posset.<sup>142</sup>

At his court were a number of poets whose task it was to adorn the paintings and walls with poems, so that he [Philip] was able to show a painting both silent and speaking.

139 Bibl. Nat. Paris, MS CCC 124, fol. 105r; cf. Eichberger, *Leben mit Kunst* 299; Eichberger D. – Bleyerveld Y. (eds.), *Women of Distinction: Margret of York, Margret of Austria* (Brussels: 2005) 251–252.

140 Bibl. Nat. Paris, MS CCC 124, fol. 105r: '[...] le premier bort de marbre, le second doré et en bas ung escripteau, donné par Monsr. D'Utrecht'.

141 'Nate effrons, homines superosque lacessere suetus, / Non matri parcis? Parcito ne pereas' – 'Faceless Son, used to hurting man and gods, / You do not even spare your mother? You must spare her, or otherwise you will perish'. The poem was in all likelihood made by one of Philip's court poets; the poem alludes to Michael Marules's epigrammatic poem with the title "De amore" (written before 1489) = Marules, *Epigrammaton* 1, 59, lines 5–6: 'Quare / Nulla deo frons est? – Signa inimica fugit' – 'Why does he have no face? – Because he wants to hide from his enemies'; cf. Enenkel K., "Humanist Mythography between Cabinet of Rarities and Antiquarian Collection of Knowledge: Georgius Pictorius", in Häfner R. (ed.), *Mythographie in der Neuzeit. Modelle und Methoden in Literatur, Kunst und Wissenschaft* (Heidelberg: 2016) (95–121) 101. It is not entirely certain whether the frame is the original one; there are, however, no doubts that the inscription is the original one ordered by Philip of Burgundy. Cf. Eichberger, *Leben mit Kunst* 300, note 111; Veldman I., "Die moralische Funktion von Renaissance-Themen in der bildenden Kunst der Niederlande", in Kaufmann (ed.), *Die Renaissance im Blick der Nationen Europas* (Wiesbaden: 1991) 381–394.

142 Geldenhouwer, *Vita clarissimi principis Philippi a Burgundia* [...], in: idem, *Collectanea*, ed. J. Prinsen (Amsterdam: 1901) 235.



FIGURE 3.25 *Jan Gossaert, Venus and Cupido, 1521. Oil on panel, 32 × 24 cm. Brussels, Museum voor Schone Kunsten. Public domain. Wikimedia commons.*

In Philip's court, apparently a favourite game for guests, visitors, and courtiers to play was to look at the paintings of his collection and to understand them *first without the inscription* ('the silent painting'), and afterwards *with the inscription* ('the talking painting').<sup>143</sup> From the inventory of the bishop's castle in Wijk bij Duurstede (from 1529) we know that a painting with Venus and Cupid hung in his study.<sup>144</sup> The Salmacis painting must have had a similar function, and it probably bore a kind of moral interpretation on its frame which could be covered and uncovered, for example, by a curtain or a similar device.

Since the original frame is lost, we do not know which interpretation it was, but it surely must have been one of the earlier ones discussed above (before ca. 1515). If one looks for markers of interpretation on the painting itself, it seems to me that certain pictorial devices point in the direction of a moral warning against Salmacis: first, the extremely aggressive movements of the nymph; second, the expression of aggression in the face of Salmacis; and third, the expression of fear in the face of Hermaphroditus. If the epigram took these markers into account, it is highly probable that the interpretation it offered was one of the warnings against sexual pleasures or *lascivia*, worldliness, vanity, or similar things.<sup>145</sup> Since Philip's court poets composed Latin epigrams, it could well have been based on one of the Latin explanations given above, although one should certainly not exclude the French *Ovide moralisé* (ca. 1317–1328), with which Philippe and his intellectual environment were also acquainted. Eichberger's catalogue of 2005 says that Gossaert did not base his work on Ovid's text, but on the *Ovide moralisé*, where Salmacis was allegorically taken as the personification of 'feminine sin and seduction' or as 'female temptress',<sup>146</sup> and seen as a kind of parallel to Eve.

Also noteworthy is the small format and arched form of Gossaert's Salmacis painting (32,5 × 21 cm): in this it resembles icons, meant for private meditation, such as the one Gossaert painted with the Virgin and child, now in the National Gallery (30,5 × 23,5 cm), or with *Adam and Eve*, now in the Museo

143 For the aspect of the 'speaking images' cf. Sterk J., *Philips van Bourgondië (1465–1524): Bischof van Utrecht, als protagonist van de Renaissance, zijn leven en mecenaat* (Zutphen: 1980) 13.

144 The (large) painting was covered with a yellow curtain. Cf. Ainsworth et alii (eds.), *Jan Gossaert's Renaissance* 66.

145 It may be that Salmacis's gesture – she tries to grab Hermaphrodite's throat – was meant as a hint in this direction, i.e. to the interpretations of Albericus (or the Third Vatican Mythographer), Giovanni del Virgilio, or Giovanni dei Bonsignori; cf. above.

146 Chiari S. (ed.), *Renaissance Tales of Desire* 25; *Ovide moralisé* IV, 2224–2389. Eichberger – Bleyerveld (eds.), *Women of Distinction* 252.

Thyssen-Bornemisza in Madrid [Fig. 3.26A].<sup>147</sup> Interestingly, the mythological panels have the same form and size as these religious *Meditationsbilder*, and as the preserved Venus and Cupid panel. I think that the Salmacis painting too was meant for the learned game of the interpretation of images, but also as an icon for private moral meditation. I suppose that in this respect mythological images functioned for Bishop Philip of Burgundy not so differently from religious ones, and that his court painter Jan Gossaert was well aware of that.

It could well be that this usage was based on a kind typological thinking. With respect to both its pictorial representation and its moral interpretation, there are parallels between the icon of *Salmacis and Hermaphroditus* and that of *Adam and Eve*. Most interestingly, on the Thyssen-Bornemisza panel, just behind Adam and Eve a pool appears [Fig. 3.26A]. This pool could well function as a pictorial parallel to the one in the Salmacis painting – there are even parallels between its location in the painting and its form [Fig. 3.26B]. Furthermore, Salmacis's nude body resembles Eve's, and like Eve, she has long, blonde, curly hair. Hermaphroditus's body is very similar to Adam's, and they have identical faces and hair (dark blond and curly). Salmacis is taking the position to the left of Hermaphroditus (from her perspective), as Eve is standing to the left of Adam. The left position is a marker for the moral interpretation: it indicates where sinfulness and the loss of innocence come from – it is in both cases the woman who tries to seduce the man, whereas he is reluctant but in the end does not prevail. Characteristically, as one can see on the Adam and Eve panel, the devil (in the form of a snake) comes from the left too: the snake and Eve's hand do the same thing – they offer the apple to Adam (i.e. the act of seduction). The same typological parallels can be observed if one compares Gossaert's *Salmacis and Hermaphroditus* to his *Adam and Eve* in the Gemäldegalerie in Berlin [Fig. 3.27],<sup>148</sup> although the water is now at a greater distance from the couple. Interestingly, Eve, like Salmacis, displays aggressive movements. Maryan Ainsworth and Matt Kavalier have rightly pointed out the aggression in Eve's movements and the originality of Gossaert's invention.<sup>149</sup>

147 Gossaert, *Adam and Eve*, ca. 1507–1508; oil on panel, 65,5 × 37 cm, inv. no. 163 (1930.26); Maryan Ainsworth in Ainsworth et alii (eds.), *Jan Gossaert's Renaissance* 114–117 (no. 1).

148 Jan Gossaert, *Adam and Eve*, ca. 1525–1530; oil on panel, 173,2 × 115,8 cm. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Gemäldegalerie, no. 661; cf. Maryan Ainsworth's description in Ainsworth et alii (eds.), *Jan Gossaert's Renaissance* 120–122 (no. 3); Silver, "Figure nude" 5–6; and Mensger, *Jan Gossaert* 141–142.

149 Kavalier, "Gossaert's Bodies and Empathy", comment to Fig. 5: 'Eve pursues Adam while extending to him the apple, while Adam turns abruptly away, signaling caution. The poses and gestures of pursuit and avoidance seem automatic, ingrained, and forcefully convey the psychological dimensions of the encounter. Eve is unusually aggressive; her posture





FIGURE 3.26A Jan Gossaert, Adam and Eve, ca. 1510. Oil on panel, 56,5 × 37 cm. Madrid, Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza.



FIGURE 3.26B *Jan Gossaert, Salmacis and Hermaphroditus, ca. 1517. Oil on panel, 32,5 × 21 cm. Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam / Photographer: Studio Tromp, Rotterdam.*





FIGURE 3.27 *Jan Gossaert, Adam and Eve, ca. 1525. Oil on panel, 172,2 × 115,8 cm. Berlin, Staatliche Museen, Gemäldegalerie.*



As Hermaphroditus turns away from Salmacis, so too does Adam turn away from Eve. And of course, Adam's and Eve's body language also is a clear marker of moral interpretation. It is Eve (the figuration of female seduction, sin, forbidden sensual pleasure, vanity, etc.) who aggressively imposes sin and moral failure on the man, who is afraid and tries to avoid it (albeit in vain). There is little uncertainty about the fact that this was exactly the interpretation Gossaert himself gave to the scene of Eve giving the apple to Adam. In other versions Gossaert explicitly connected Eve's apple with sexual love imposed by the woman on the man. A copy of one of these iconological inventions, a drawing, is kept in the Rhode Island School of Design:<sup>150</sup> with one hand Eve is about to pluck the apple; with her other, she is about to touch Adam's genitals.

The analysis of Gossaert's *Salmacis and Hermaphroditus* brings to the fore three pictorial devices that may help us identify depictions of the story as moral warnings:

- (1) the aggressive body language and movements of the nymph
- (2) the expression on Salmacis's face
- (3) the expression of fear on the face of Hermaphroditus
- (4) the hopeless and miserable ineffectiveness of Hermaphroditus in his self-defence.

I think that the outstanding artist Gossaert by ca. 1517 had already invented the most important pictorial devices that could be used as interpretative markers for the moral meaning of the story. I suppose that this may provide us with an important key to understanding why early modern artists were so interested in Ovid's inversion of gendered behaviour, and why they had such a great preference for presenting exactly the most violent part of the story: they invite their viewer to identify with the male character, and make him afraid of the female one, the nymph.

The aggressive body language and movements of the nymph appear in the majority of the depictions, including those by Scarsellino [Fig. 3.12A], Pieter van der Borch [Fig. 3.12B], Finson [Fig. 3.14], Moreelse [Fig. 3.15B], Jacob Pynas and Magdalena van de Passe [Fig. 3.6], Baur [Fig. 3.17], Michel de Marolles

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in particular departs from the expected manner of portraying her. Adam's ungainly form likewise deviates from respectable models'. Maryan Ainsworth in Ainsworth et alii (eds.), *Jan Gossaert's Renaissance* 120: 'Eve moves aggressively toward Adam [...]'.  
 150 Unknown Netherlandish artist, after Gossaert, ca. 1525; black chalk; 62,1 × 46,8 cm. On this drawing cf. Stijn Alsteens in Ainsworth et alii (eds.), *Jan Gossaert's Renaissance* 316–318 (no. 68); and Kavalier, "Gossaert's Bodies and Empathy" Fig. 4 with comment.

[Fig. 3.18], Sandrart, and Krauß. In Baur's etching, the nymph has a huge and heavy body, like that of a wrestler. In a number of depictions, the expression of the nymph's face is determined and focused, like that of a hunter; this is the case in the works by, *inter alia*, De Marolles [Fig. 3.18], De Matteis [Fig. 3.19], and Finson [Fig. 3.14]. Furthermore, in some depictions Hermaphroditus's face or body language expresses fear, such as in those by the artists just mentioned.

The fact that some of the artists equipped the boy with female features may have been another pictorial interpretative marker. Consult, for example, Pieter van der Borcht's woodcut, which shows both the boy and the nymph with a round female figure [Fig. 3.12B]; Scarsellino's painting, which depicts the boy with hips and a round bottom [Fig. 3.12A]; or Daniel Vertangen's panel, with its feminine Hermaphroditus [cf. below Fig. 3.28E] – in general, in the majority of the works discussed above Hermaphroditus is depicted with long, curly, mostly blond hair. All these features that do not stem from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* surely make the male more feminine, or, following the Latin diction, they 'effeminate' him. Thus, as pictorial interpretative markers, these features can point to negative moral interpretations of the myth, e.g. as warnings against the *effeminating effect* of sensual pleasure, love affairs, leisure, luxury, idleness, vanity, worldly affairs, heterosexual intercourse, homosexual and bisexual practices, and so on.

### The Pictorial Interpretative Markers – Killers of Heterosexual Erotic?

The visual artists who depicted the topic of *Salmacis and Hermaphroditus*, and their patrons, buyers, and audience, were very well aware of the fact that they were engaging in an erotic discourse. It was generally known that the Ovidian stories of the *Metamorphoses* were full of eroticism and sex, and it was also expected that the depictions would contain nude bodies and 'obscene' actions. *Salmacis and Hermaphroditus* may serve as a paradigm for this aspect. The Bolognese painter Ludovico Carracci, who made an impressive painting of the myth, to be discussed below [cf. below Fig. 3.28A], was asked in 1607 by the poet Giovanni Battista Marino in a letter to paint a light-minded Ovidian 'fable (*favoletta*), such as the one of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus, in an *erotic and obscene invention*' – '*una fantasia oscena e lasciva*'.<sup>151</sup> Probably Ludovico Carracci was inspired by Marino's request to paint the naked nymph and the

<sup>151</sup> Cf. Summerscale A. (ed., transl.), *Malvasia's Life of the Carracci. Commentary and Translation* (Pennsylvania S.U.P.: 2000) 243 (emphasis mine).

innocent nude boy sitting at the pool. Furthermore, *erotic and obscene inventions* were regarded as favourable for the aesthetic appreciation of paintings. The same Giovanni Battista Marino praised in a madrigal Ludovico Carracci's *Salmacis and Hermaphroditus* for causing in the viewer the psychological reaction of 'wonder and amazement' – so that the viewer almost loses his mind and gets lost in the painting.<sup>152</sup> A painter of the 16th or 17th century who depicted the topic of *Salmacis and Hermaphroditus* was certainly aware that he was about creating something erotic, if not 'obscene'.

But what is the effect of the above-mentioned interpretative markers on the erotic radiation of the pictorial representations? This is, of course, not easy to answer, given the manifold and complicated cultural, historical, and individual parameters of the erotic. One must take several things into account. First, of course, one must remember that the majority of the depictions were made for men. We know of a few female possessors of Salmacis paintings, such as Margret of Austria,<sup>153</sup> but in general women were not the works' patrons or buyers. Second – given the severe restrictions from ca. 1515 to 1700 with respect to sexual practices (men and women alike often kept their tunics on while having sex), the average viewer must have experienced nude bodies as being much more exciting than would be the case nowadays, especially in Western culture.

If the nude in itself may have been a rather exciting experience, the question arises regarding the way in which this experience may have been influenced by gendered representations of the nude body, body language, facial expressions, and behaviour. It may well be that the erotic, for most heterosexual males, depended on a kind of "normally" gendered<sup>154</sup> body language, facial expression, behaviour, and representation of the nude, at least for the nymph. For homosexual males, it was probably different. It looks as if there was a broad spectrum and a scale of markers. Baur's etching [Fig. 3.17] represents an extreme: for most heterosexual viewers, it probably looked like a

152 'Just as the clear and tranquil waters of Salmacis' pool had in themselves the power to awaken love, so you, Carracci, in creating their resemblance through art, possess powers of your own to arouse wonder. But who knows, which brings the greater loss, which the greater gain – the miracle of love or the miracle of astonishment? The one joins two beings in but a single body, the other divides you from yourself'. Cf. Summerscale, *Malvasia's Life of the Carracci*, *ibidem*. The poem is part of Marino's ekphrastic work *La Galleria: La Galleria distinta in pitture et sculture* (Milano, Giovan Battista Bidelli: 1620). For Marino's poems on Ludovico Carracci's paintings cf. Keazor H., "[...] quella miraculosa mano": Zu zwei Madrigalen Marinos", in Stillers R. – Kruse Ch. (eds.), *Barocke Bildkulturen: Dialog der Künste in Giovan Battista Marinos Galleria* (Wiesbaden: 2013) 273–305.

153 Cf. above.

154 'normally gendered', here, in the sense of heterosexual norms.

sexual nightmare, with the huge male and repulsive body of the nymph, and her aggressive body language. It is true that around 1639 women were allowed to weigh a few kilos more than presently, but Baur's Salmacis has an extremely plump and boorish body, with a male head and shoulders, and 'huge' male arms and legs that have enormous muscles, like those of a freestyle wrestler. With all her power she throws her massive body in the direction of the poor boy, who reacts with fear and panic. Pieter van der Borch's Salmacis is in the same vein (although it may be less extreme): she has a plump and boorish body, a kind of male face, short hair, and she has aggressive male body language [Fig. 3.12B]. In Scarsellino's painting the body language of the nymph is as repulsive as it is in the depictions by Baur and Pieter van der Borch, but her nude body is more "normally" gendered, although its feminine features are not highlighted and her face is a bit boorish [Fig. 3.12A]. But Scarsellino's painting contains yet another offence for male heterosexual viewers: the way in which he depicted Hermaphroditus made it impossible for them to identify with him – a timid and anxious boy with female features (hips) and female behaviour. In Finson's painting [Fig. 3.14] Salmacis has an acceptable "female" body, but the monstrosity of the nymph is evoked by her frightening facial expression (with eyes that resemble those of a predator), and very aggressive body language. In these four depictions the "negative" pictorial markers probably greatly diminished the erotic feelings of heterosexual male viewers. Homosexual males, of course, may have experienced them differently. Naturally, they must have been more interested in the nude body of Hermaphroditus, and therefore did not focus on the body of the nymph. For them it was, of course, more important that nude Hermaphroditus be attractive, and this could depend on various parameters.

But certainly not all artists worked along the lines of Scarsellino, Pieter van der Borch, Finson, and Baur. The majority of them tried to introduce erotic elements and create a certain erotic tension, with an eye to either heterosexual or homosexual male viewers. This does not mean that they had to eschew pictorial markers of moral interpretations, or elements that highlighten the inversion of "normally" gendered behaviour. A good example of this is Paulus Moreelse's Salmacis (of the painting in the painting) [Fig. 3.15B]: the nymph displays some violent actions but also has a beautiful feminine body; her face expresses sexual longing, but not the cruel determination of a hunter, such as Finson's Salmacis [Fig. 3.14]. The way in which Moreelse painted the scene seems to suggest that the couple is about to make love. Moreover, a beautiful and seductive young woman, who shows her impressive décolleté and the nipple of her right breast, plays the main part in Moreelse's painting [Fig. 3.15A]. Thus, although Moreelse's painting clearly represents a warning against sexual adventures, giving in to erotic pleasure, and prostitutes, it is full of eroticism,

in this case for heterosexual male viewers. The same goes for other cases in which the nymph is depicted with a beautiful feminine body, such as in the works by Spranger [Fig. 3.20A], Paolo de Matteis [Fig. 3.19], Francesco Albani [Figs. 3.10A, 3.10B, 3.13A, 3.13B, and below Fig. 3.28C], and Bernard Picart [cf. below, Fig. 3.28F]. In De Matteis's invention, the nymph has a female body and blonde hair; she seems to be engaged in a kind of erotic play, trying to catch the boy. In Albani's large oil painting in the Galleria Sabauda, Salmacis embraces Hermaphroditus in a very tender and feminine way [Fig. 3.10A]; her half-closed eyes express a kind of female sensuality and longing; she is about kissing and making love, and apparently does not mind that the boy is pulling her hair. Although Hermaphroditus is reluctant, he touches the nymph's beautiful breast with his left hand. In Albani's smaller painting in the Galleria Sabauda, another feminine Salmacis, filled with desire and longing, presses her beautiful bosom against the nude body of the boy [Fig. 3.10B and 3.13A]. The same is true for Albani's oval oil painting once owned by Philippe II, duke of Orléans [Fig. 3.13B]: the nymph radiates femininity; she also looks into the eyes of Hermaphroditus with desire and longing; and with her right hand she seems to caress her lover's hair. Although all these paintings highlight the inversion of "normally" gendered behaviour and the appearance of the nude, they contain erotic elements that are meant to be attractive to heterosexual male viewers. Interestingly, all of them also emphasise elements that are attractive to homosexual males. This aspect will be discussed in the next section.

### Homosexual Erotic: The Voyeuristic Scene

Choosing the voyeuristic scene (in Ovid's narrative part 10)<sup>155</sup> generally emphasizes and enhances the erotic element. It is noteworthy that quite a number of early modern depictions are dedicated to this scene, including the paintings by Spranger in the Kunsthistorisches Museum [Fig. 3.20A]; Ludovico Carracci (1555–1619) in a private collection (made ca. 1607) [Fig. 3.28A],<sup>156</sup>

155 Cf. the initial section of this contribution.

156 Ludovico Carracci, *Salmacis and Hermaphroditus*, ca. 1607. Oil on canvas, 114,3 × 151,8 cm. Sold at Christie's in 2006, now in a private collection. For this painting and its date cf. Keazor, "[...] quella miracolosa mano" 285; Baroni J.-L., *Old Master Pictures Evening Sale* [...] Christie's (London: 2006) 116–119. Various drawings of the painting are preserved by Ludovico Carracci and probably also a pupil, one in Florence, Fondazione Horn (Ludovico Carracci himself), and two in the Collection of her Majesty the Queen at Windsor Castle. Cf. Wittkower R., *The Drawings of the Carracci in the Collection of her Majesty the Queen at*

plus a copy of it in the Galleria Pallavicini, which was ascribed both to Sisto Badalocchio (ca. 1581–1647) and to Francesco Brizio (1574–1623),<sup>157</sup> furthermore the paintings by Francesco Albani in the Louvre [Fig. 3.28B],<sup>158</sup> in the Peyton Wright Gallery [Fig. 3.28C],<sup>159</sup> in the Dulwich Picture Gallery,<sup>160</sup> in the Hamburger Kunsthalle, and in other collections,<sup>161</sup> by Samuel van Hoogstraten (painted in 1670–1676) [Fig. 3.28D],<sup>162</sup> by Daniel Vertangen (ca. 1600–ca. 1683)

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*Windsor Castle* (London: 1952) 109 (fig. 7). According to Wittkower and Keazor the one in the Fondazione Horn was the initial drawing after which the painting was made (Wittkower, *ibidem*; Keazor, *ibidem*). One of the Windsor drawings was ascribed to Agostino Carracci by Charles Rogers, in *A Collection of prints in imitation of drawings* (London: 1778), vol. II, 33. Wittkower is probably right when he thinks that the drawing with taller trees (Kearor, “[...] quella miraculosa mano”, fig. 3) was made by a pupil of Carracci as a preparatory step for an engraving. For an image of the drawing in the Fondazione Horn cf. Keazor *ibidem*, fig. 2; also digitally accessible: <http://www.iconos.it/le-metamorfosi-di-ovidio/libro-iv/ermafroditto-e-salmace/immagini/26-ermafroditto-e-salmace/>.

- 157 The adscription to Badalocchio goes back to Tietze H., “Annibale Carracci's Galerie im Palazzo Farnese”, *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen des Allerhöchsten Kaiserhauses* 16, 2 (1906); it was taken over by Zeri F., *La Galleria Pallavicini in Roma: catalogo dei dipinti* (Florence: 1959) 29–30. The painting in the Galleria Pallavicini, which is smaller (108 × 140,5 cm) than the one auctioned in London, seems to be a copy of Fig. 28A. As such, it could have been made by Ludovico Carracci or one of his pupils (such as Badalocchio). For the adscription to Francesco Brizio cf. Brogi A., “Francesco Brizio: il ‘paesare di penna’ e altre cose”, *Studi di storia dell'arte* 4 (1993) 85–127; Keazor, “[...] quella miraculosa mano” 285.
- 158 Francesco Albani, *Salmacis and Hermaphroditus*, ca. 1620–1625. Oil on panel, 14 × 31 cm. Paris, Louvre. Of this painting, which was then part of the Galerie Napoléon, an etching and engraving also exists, 8 × 17,4 cm, made between 1804 and 1815 by Antoine Michel Filhol (etching) and Claude Niquet (engraving) after a drawing by Antoine Patrice Guyot. For the painting cf. Puglisi, *Francesco Albani* 143 (image no. 59). Albani's inspiration for his Louvre invention was Carracci's painting, sold at Christies in 2006 (cf. Keazor, “[...] quella miraculosa mano” 285), and probably not the copy of it now in the Galleria Pallavicini, as Puglisi thinks (*ibidem*).
- 159 Workshop of Francesco Albani (1578–1660), *Salmacis and Hermaphroditus*, early 17th century. Oil on canvas, 62,2 × 76,2 cm. Peyton Wright Gallery.
- 160 Francesco Albani, *Salmacis and Hermaphroditus*, oil on canvas, 60,6 × 74 cm. Dulwich Picture Gallery (no. 458, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Albani,\\_Francesco\\_-\\_Salmacis\\_and\\_Hermaphrodite\\_-\\_Google\\_Art\\_Project.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Albani,_Francesco_-_Salmacis_and_Hermaphrodite_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg)).
- 161 E.g. The Royal Collection Trust (RCIN 402770): Francesco Albani, *Salmacis and Hermaphroditus*, oil on panel; acquired by George III from the collection of Consul Smith in 1762; <https://www.royalcollection.org.uk/collection/402770/salmacis-sees-hermaphroditus-bathing>).
- 162 Samuel of Hoogstraten, *Salmacis and Hermaphroditus*, ca. 1670–1676. Oil on canvas, 95,7 × 75,7 cm. The Leiden Collection.

[Fig. 3.28E];<sup>163</sup> by Johannes Glauber (1650–1721),<sup>164</sup> by Moses van Uyttenbroek in the Mauritshuis (1627) [Fig. 3.16];<sup>165</sup> and by Louis-Jean-François Lagernée in the same museum (made in 1773),<sup>166</sup> as well as a drawing attributed to Agostino Carracci (1557–1602) in the Louvre,<sup>167</sup> the woodcut accompanying Niccolò degli Agostini's verse version of the *Metamorphoses* (1522), an engraving invented by Herman van Swanvelt (between 1629 and 1641), which survives in an etching published by Giovanni Battista de Rossi<sup>168</sup> and in a reverse etching published by Pierre Drevet (1663–1738),<sup>169</sup> and the 1708 etching by Bernard Picart [Fig. 3.28F],<sup>170</sup> plus the mezzotint made after it by Elisha Kir(c)kall.<sup>171</sup>

In their compositions of the voyeuristic scene, the visual artists build up an intense erotic tension; they do their best to express Salmacis's feelings, and invite the – usually male – viewer to identify with her, and to gaze at the beautiful, naked body of Hermaphroditus. Salmacis's emotional reaction is rendered through movements of her body and the expression on her face. Hermaphroditus's body is totally exposed to the nymph's gaze: he is depicted either in a static posture (sitting on the shore or standing in the pool) – such as in Ludovico Carracci's painting of ca. 1607 [Fig. 3.28A] and in Bernard Picart's etching of 1708 [Fig. 3.28F] – or extremely slowly and reluctantly entering the water, such as in another successful invention by Francesco Albani, preserved

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- 163 Daniel Vertangen (ca. 1600–ca. 1683) *Salmacis and Hermaphroditus*, oil on panel, 22 × 29,5 cm. Auctioned in 2014. Private Collection, present whereabouts unknown.
  - 164 *Salmacis and Hermaphroditus*, oil on canvas, 123,5 × 93,2 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (no. SK-A-R 17).
  - 165 Moses van Uyttenbroeck, *Salmacis and Hermaphroditus*, 1627. Oil on panel, 43 × 66 cm. The Hague, Mauritshuis.
  - 166 *Salmacis and Hermaphroditus*, 1773, oil on copper (copper on panel), 38,5 × 30. The Hague, Mauritshuis (no. 776).
  - 167 Agostino Carracci (attributed), *Salmacis and Hermaphroditus*, pen drawing. Paris, Louvre (inv. no. 7492).
  - 168 Herman van Swanvelt (inventor), *Salmacis and Hermaphroditus*, etching, 15,6 × 21,1 cm, published by Giovanni Battista de Rossi. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, P-P-OB-60.869; for the image cf. URL: <http://hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.181801>, public domain.
  - 169 Herman van Swanvelt (inventor), *Salmacis and Hermaphroditus*, etching, 15,6 × 21,1 cm, published by Drevet. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, P-P-1889-A-14381; for the image cf. URL: <https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/en/collection/RP-P-1889-A-14381>, public domain.
  - 170 Bernard Picart and his workshop (1708), *Salmacis and Hermaphroditus*. Etching made after a drawing by Bernard Picart, 13,5 × 14,4 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.
  - 171 Elisha Kirkall, *Salmacis and Hermaphroditus*, 1720–1730, mezzotint, 11,2 × 15,1 cm. British Museum (no. X.6.112). For the artist cf. Cust L.H., art. "Kirkall, Elisha", in *Dictionary of National Biography* 31 (1885–1900) 204. Kirkall illustrated John Dryden's translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* which appeared first in 1717 (London, Tonson and Watts: 1717).

in the painting in the Louvre of 1620–1625 [Fig. 3.28B]<sup>172</sup> and in the Peyton Whiggy Gallery [Fig. 3.28C], and in other paintings, such as those by Samuel van Hoogstraten [Fig. 3.28D] and Daniel Vertangen [Fig. 3.28E]. It is important to note that this is not the way in which Ovid depicted the scene; he had said that Hermaphroditus quickly took off his clothes and jumped into the water.

The idea of the static, seated Hermaphroditus was very convincingly applied by Spranger, who used the famous Capitoline thorn-puller as example,<sup>173</sup> and was taken over by Ludovico Carracci, who did a variation on it in another beautiful invention, his painting of *Salmacis and Hermaphroditus*, sold in 2006 at Christie's [Fig. 3.28A],<sup>174</sup> of which a copy exists in the Galleria Pallavicini in Rome,<sup>175</sup> and by Bernard Picart in his etching of 1708 [Fig. 3.28F]. In the Ludovico Carracci painting auctioned in London, Hermaphroditus is as absent-minded as he is in Spranger's work [Fig. 3.28A]. The boy is not aware of Salmacis's presence, and he is looking in a totally different direction. In Carracci's painting this artistic device produces the effect of an even greater tension, because the nymph is so close, and in fact is no longer hiding, whereas the innocent boy seems to notice her. Moreover, Carracci emphasises Hermaphroditus's absent-mindedness through the posture of "the thinker" (or the melancholic). The nymph is rendered in a stark contrast through the dynamic posture of her body, which unites various movements of her arms, legs, head, and the upper part of her body, and through a focused gaze directed at the object of her desire.

The voyeuristic scene draws the eye of the viewers almost automatically to the nude body of Hermaphroditus, and in this way the depictions may easily take on a homosexual erotic quality and a special attractiveness for homosexual viewers. Artists who rendered Hermaphroditus as a *very* young boy may

172 *Salmacis and Hermaphroditus*, ca. 1630. Oil on panel, 14 × 31 cm. Paris, Louvre. Cf. Puglisi, *Francesco Albani* 143 (image no. 59). Cf. also the etching and engraving, made between 1804 and 1815 by Antoine Michel Filhol (etching) and Claude Niquet (engraving), after a drawing by Antoine Patrice Guyot.

173 It is not certain which painter invented the seated posture of Hermaphrodite when he was spied on by Salmacis. Already in Giulio Romano's oval fresco in the Villa Madama (1520–1523) Hermaphrodite is depicted sitting naked on the shore of the pool, while the nymph approaches him at high speed. Apparently he was sitting there in the same posture when the nymph was watching him.

174 *Salmacis and Hermaphroditus*, ca. 1607. Oil on canvas, 114,3 × 151,8 cm. The painting belongs now to a private collection.

175 Cf. Tietze "Annibale Carraccis Galerie im Palazzo Farnese"; cf. Zeri, *La Galleria Pallavicini in Roma*: 29–30, and A. Gentili in <http://www.iconos.it/le-metamorfosi-di-ovidio/libro-iv/ermafroditto-e-salmace/immagini/29-ermafroditto-e-salmace/>.





FIGURE 3.28A *Ludovico Carracci, Salmacis and Hermaphroditus, 1615. Oil on canvas, 114,3 × 151,8 cm. Private collection. Wikimedia commons.*



FIGURE 3.28B *Francesco Albani, Salmacis and Hermaphroditus, ca. 1620–1625. Oil on panel, 14 × 31 cm. Paris, Louvre. Wikimedia commons.*



FIGURE 3.28BB *Francesco Albani, Salmacis and Hermaphroditus. Etching and engraving after Albani's oil painting [Fig. 3.28B], 8 × 17,4 cm, made between 1804 and 1815 by Antoine Michel Filhol (etching) and Claude Niquet (engraving) after a drawing by Antoine Patrice Guyot.*



FIGURE 3.28C *Workshop of Francesco Albani, Salmacis and Hermaphroditus, early 17th century. Oil on canvas, 62,2 × 76,2 cm. Peyton Wright Gallery. Wikimedia commons.*

have worked in the direction of homosexual paedophilia. Interestingly, this is the case with the most important paintings that render the voyeuristic scene: the ones by Spranger [Fig. 3.20A], Ludovico Carracci [3.28A], Francesco Albani [Figs. 3.28B and C], and Samuel van Hoogstraten [Fig. 3.28D]. Spranger's Hermaphroditus is 13 or 14 years old, Carracci's 11 to 13 years, and Albani's even younger. The Bolognese painter Francesco Albani seems to have specialised in this kind of representation of the myth. From him and his workshop we have a whole series of paintings with the voyeuristic scene, and in all of them Hermaphroditus is depicted as an extremely innocent and naïve young boy [Figs. 3.28B and C].<sup>176</sup> Probably not coincidentally, Albani is one of the few artists who never forgot to render explicitly the boy's genitals, which also goes for his other versions of the myth, with Salmacis trying to rape Hermaphroditus [Figs. 3.10A and B, and 3.13A]. In a painting made ca. 1620–1625, given as a present to the French King Louis XIV (now in the Louvre), the boy seems to be only some 7 or 8 years old, although he is stripping off his clothes and presenting his naked body in a seductive way [Fig. 3.28B].<sup>177</sup> In this painting, even the nymph takes on a homoerotic quality: Albani endowed her with boyish features, and she is stripping in a way very similar to that of the boy. When an official reproduction was made 1804–1815 (the painting belonged then to the Galerie Napoléon), this aspect was obviously considered an offence: the boyish features were replaced by feminine ones, and the nymph was depicted as a grown-up woman [Fig. 3.28BB]. Samuel van Hoogstraten, in a painting which was auctioned in 2003 at Sotheby's [Fig. 3.28D],<sup>178</sup> also presents Hermaphroditus as an extremely naïve and innocent boy, who, moreover, is frontally exposed to the gaze of the – male – viewers (whereas the nymph can

176 Other versions of this invention by Albani are in the Dulwich Picture Gallery (no. 458), oil on canvas, 60,6 × 74 cm ([https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Albani,\\_Francesco\\_-\\_Salmacis\\_and\\_Hermaphrodite\\_-\\_Google\\_Art\\_Project.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Albani,_Francesco_-_Salmacis_and_Hermaphrodite_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg)); and in The Royal Collection Trust (RCIN 402770, oil on panel; acquired by George III from the collection of Consul Smith in 1762; <https://www.royalcollection.org.uk/collection/402770/salmacis-sees-hermaphroditus-bathing>).

177 Francesco Albani, oil on copper, 14 × 31 cm, Louvre, no. 19. Cf. Loire S., *L'Albane (1578–1660)* (Paris: 2000) 61.

178 Oil on canvas 95,5 × 75,5 cm, signed 'SvH', New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art; for the painting cf. Brusati C., *Artifice and Illusion: the Art and Writing of Samuel van Hoogstraten* (Chicago-London: 1995) 367; there in the catalogue of the complete paintings no. D-34; Roscam Abbing M., *De schilder en schrijver Samuel van Hoogstraten. Eigentijdse bronnen en oeuvre van gesigneerde schilderijen* (Leiden: 1993) 94, no. 39; the painting is not discussed in Weststeijn Th. (ed.), *The Universal Art of Samuel van Hoogstraten (1627–1678): Painter, Writer, and Courtier* (Amsterdam: 2013).



FIGURE 3.28D *Samuel of Hoogstraten, Salmacis and Hermaphroditus, ca. 1670–1676. Oil on canvas, 95,7 × 75,7 cm. The Leiden Collection.*



see him only from behind). The painting radiates a kind of homosexual paedophilia, which is not diminished by the fact that the boy shamefully keeps on his underwear and presents himself in all his vulnerability. Also the body of Daniel Vertangen's Hermaphroditus [Fig. 3.28E] is totally exposed to the eyes of the viewers. The boy displays a great and seemingly feminine vulnerability and shamefulness. Like a woman he shamefully has turned down his eyes, while he innocently dips his toes into the cold water and seductively strips off the last bits of his clothing.

Homosexual eroticism and paedophilia were probably not envisaged in Ovid's narrative – he focused more on a playful inversion of “normal” gendered behaviour<sup>179</sup> – but of course, the play with the inversion of gender may have given way to various kinds of homoerotic readings. In a marked difference, the medieval depictions and interpretations seem to have excluded them. Homosexual eroticism and paedophilia in connection with the Salmacis myth seem to be areas that were especially discovered and explored by a number of early modern artists. The voyeuristic scene is obviously the part of Ovid's narrative that best suited this interest, although it may also be expressed in the scene with the woman who is about to rape the young man. Homoerotic readings of the “rape” may be suggested e.g. by the paintings by Finson [Fig. 3.14] and, again, Francesco Albani [Figs. 3.10A and B].

### **Eroticism and Humour in the Visual Representations of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus**

The emphasis on the erotic may very well go together with pictorial markers of playfulness and humour. Given the source, this seems obvious: in general, Ovid's erotic mythology of the *Metamorphoses* is full of humour, and so is his playful inversion of “normally” gendered behaviour in the Salmacis story. Many early modern patrons, artists, and buyers of paintings understood this very well. Although not every artist was eager to present the humorous aspect as the most important one of the myth, a number of pictorial devices were applied or developed. One device was the exaggeration of “inverted” gendered behaviour. Taken this way, a much emphasised male behaviour for the nymph, or very feminine features of Hermaphroditus could produce humorous effects. Whether viewers considered this to be funny or not was, of course, always a question of personal taste and subjective feeling. In general, it seems safer to interpret pictorial representations of the myth as humorous only if this aspect

179 Cf. the initial section of this contribution.

is supported by more than one pictorial detail. Take, for example, Scarsellino's painting [Fig. 3.12A]: the extremely aggressive "male" movement of the nymph may have been regarded as funny or not funny, but the humour is enhanced by other elements. These elements include the "female" body of the young boy, his cowardly behaviour, and also his naive innocence: when he is attacked by the nymph, he is innocently caressing his dog. In Van Uytenbroeck's painting of *Salmacis and Hermaphroditus* in the Mauritshuis, humour is created through various means [Fig. 3.16]: first by the unusual perspective of the voyeuristic scene, which shows the plump nymph from an unfavourable perspective, from behind. The result is that the large buttocks of the fat and boorish woman who watches the boy become the most eye-catching thing in the painting.<sup>180</sup> Another comic element is the great difference in size between the huge nymph and the tiny little boy who is running into the water. Another indication of a comical effect may be the addition of cows (on the hilltop). Of course, they may simply indicate the bucolic character of the landscape, but in connection with the boorish nymph they may also have been meant to produce laughter. The monstrous male and boorish body of the nymph in Baur's etching, in combination with the panicking reaction of the boy in the pool [Fig. 3.17], may have also been meant to bring forth a comical effect. In some of Albani's paintings, Hermaphroditus, funnily enough, pulls Salmacis's hair, a typically female technique of fighting [Figs. 3.10A, 3.13A and B].<sup>181</sup> In Ludovico Carracci's painting, humour is produced by the stark contrast between the massive attack of the huge nymph and the innocent, absent-minded boy who does not register her presence, although she is very close [Fig. 3.28A]. This funny contrast is strengthened by Hermaphroditus's nice pet, a little dog which is relaxing next to him in a comfortable position. The cute animal exactly mirrors the inadequate behaviour of his master: he is white (the colour of innocence), he does not suspect anything bad is going to happen, and he is relaxing, even though danger is very close. It is difficult to say whether Hermaphroditus dipping his toes into the (cold) water, such as in the paintings by Samuel van Hoogstraten [Fig. 3.28D] and Daniel Vertangen [Fig. 3.28E], was meant as a humorous element. It could also have been used simply as a device to express the innocence of the boy.

But there are also more simple pictorial markers of humour. The most important one is the use of Amor, cupids, and amoretti. Bernard Picart integrated the god of love into his elegant invention of 1708 [Fig. 3.28F]: Cupid participates

180 Moses van Uytenbroeck, *Salmacis and Hermaphroditus*, 1627. Oil on panel, 43 × 66 cm. The Hague, Mauritshuis.

181 E.g. in the paintings in the Landesmuseum of Oldenburg (1016060) and the Galleria Sabauda in Turino.



FIGURE 3.28E *Daniel Vertangen* (ca. 1600–ca. 1683), *Salmacis and Hermaphroditus*. Oil on panel, 22 × 29,5 cm. Auctioned in 2014. Private Collection, present whereabouts unknown.



FIGURE 3.28F *Bernard Picart and his workshop* (1708), *Salmacis and Hermaphroditus*. Etching and engraving made after a drawing by Bernard Picart, 13,8 × 14,7 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum. Public domain.



FIGURE 3.29 *Francesco Albani, Salmacis and Hermaphroditus, ca. 1645–1650. Oil on canvas, 60 × 74 cm. Turino, Galleria Sabauda.*

in the scene through conspiring with Salmacis; he hides with her behind a tree and spies (with her) on the nude Hermaphroditus.

Also in Johann Ulrich Krauß's etching (ca. 1700) Cupid is participating in the events: he joins the nymph in her attack on Hermaphroditus, flying in the air and trying to hit the young man with his arrow. Cupid plays the same role in Paolo de Matteis's depiction [Fig. 3.19] and Francesco Albani's large oil painting in the Galleria Sabauda [Fig. 3.10A]. In the same painting he has depicted two colleagues in the part on the right: one is breaking his bow above his knee, the other is making a gesture that expresses his distress. In Albani's small painting in the Galleria Sabauda the number of amoretti has increased to four [Fig. 3.29]: one is trying to burn Hermaphroditus with his torch, another one (far right) is about to break his bow (and is already regretting it), one on the ground to the left of the couple is making a gesture of distress, and the fourth, sitting next to a tree, is just going about his business. In doing so, he indicates that the amoretti will not succeed in their efforts to motivate the couple to make love. The participation of the amoretti in the funny wrestling match of



a man and a woman produces a humorous effect and asks for a light-minded and frivolous interpretation, something close to Ovid's playful inversion of gendered behaviour.

### Conclusion

From ca. 1300–1770 the myth of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus (as it was told in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*) garnered much interest in literature and in the visual arts. Literature and scholarship of the period have brought forth a considerable number of interpretations, comments, versions, and explanations. The majority of them engage in allegory. A number of the allegorical pieces of advice are directed toward students and young men. It is noteworthy, however, that allegorical or moral explanations are not limited to school education; they appear in all kinds of texts and are directed toward various groups of grown-up readers, scholars and poets, theologians and art lovers, philologists and politicians, patricians and priests, Catholics and Protestants, Latin and vernacular readers alike. During the period of 1300–1770, the allegorical interpretation of Ovidian myths was a very broad phenomenon shared by many players in intellectual life. Our analyses have shown that Ovid's emphasis on the inversion of "normal" gendered behaviour in his Salmacis narrative was registered by many early modern interpreters. This does not mean that they all were specifically interested in the playful or erotic aspects of Ovid's representation, and in his subtle literary devices or psychological observations. For some of them, these aspects were surely less relevant, and they focused on other things. Anyway, almost all allegorical interpretations were composed by men, and the majority of them commented on the moral or spiritual performance of men, and directed their moral advice toward them. This was the case with the earliest interpretations of the 14th century, and it was still relevant in the middle of 18th century.

The advice and warnings of these allegories are themselves highly gendered. In most of them the female plays a negative role. Moral faults, vices, and sin are described or identified as female, or otherwise get a female touch. In the allegories, the inversion of gender is often regarded as the behaviour of men that is morally reprehensible just because it is 'female'. For example, Boccaccio interpreted Hermaphroditus's bath in the pool of Salmacis as engaging in thoughtless or lascivious speech – such speech he regarded as typically female, whereas 'speech' should be 'manly', by which he means factual, appropriate, sober, well structured, and in accordance with the principles of logic. Georgius Sabinus warned against a feminisation of sexual behaviour; Posthius and Reusner, against a feminisation of lifestyle and hairstyle. More

than once, virtue was identified with manliness, and as one can clearly see, in the early modern period there was much fear of losing one's manliness. There were also interpretations that did not make much of Ovid's narrative of gender inversion. In such interpretations, Salmacis is identified with a prostitute, Venus, or *Lascivia*, or with (forbidden) lust, such as in Spreng's explanation. Nevertheless, gender inversion could be incorporated in such advice, such as in the form of a threat that the commitment of a sin *in sexualibus* will cause '*effeminatio*', c.q. the loss of manliness.

The allegorical interpretations composed by scholars and poets were not separate from the realm of the visual arts. Quite a few of them were also accessible to painters, engravers, and all kinds of artists, since these texts were also available in the vernacular and, importantly, in printed illustrated editions. Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and its derivatives were enormously popular and many times were accompanied by a large number of woodcuts or engravings. Sometimes, Ovid's poem was replaced by other, shorter texts: prose summaries or Posthius's verses. Such editions were especially meant for painters and visual artists. Along these lines there was, in principle, much common ground for literary and visual interpretations of Ovidian myths. We must take into account that the visual artists were aware of allegorical interpretations, and that these may well have played a role in their inventions and representations.

Of course, the representations of the Salmacis and Hermaphroditus myth in the visual arts also were mostly made by men, and for male patrons or buyers. From most 16th- and 17th-century representations there appears to be a shared interest in male and female nudity, the eroticism of Ovidian mythology, and, most noteworthy, the inversion of "normal" gendered behaviour. Thus, in a sense they show a focus similar to that of the Ovidian narrative. Interestingly, the majority of the representations depict the scene of the sexual harassment, and the accompanying aggressive or "manly" behaviour of the nymph. Obviously, this was considered to be the most fascinating and "telling", if not embarrassing, part of the narrative. The visual artists made a big effort to express that adequately, and in order to do so they used various means. One way was, of course, to directly draw on Ovid's narrative and to single out striking details. But, as one may expect, not all artists engaged in a careful reading of the *Metamorphoses*, and some of them used rather shorter vernacular *Nachdichtungen*, prose summaries, or graphical examples. Focusing on the inversion of normal gendered behaviour and sexual harassment, they applied or developed a number of pictorial devices that contain details not mentioned or suggested by Ovid. Such devices are, for example, the aggressive body language and/or facial expression of the nymph, the size of the bodies of the protagonists (sometimes a little boy vs. a huge woman), and the feminisation of

Hermaphroditus's body and movements (e.g. the helplessness and ineffectiveness of his self-defence), or his hair (long, blond, or curly). These devices may bring forth effects similar to those sparked by Ovid's narrative, i.e. a playful and virtuoso depiction of the story, but they also may have been used as markers of moral interpretations of the myth. Interest in the nude and in the erotic does not exclude moral or allegorical explanations. Sometimes one must conclude that the eroticism greatly contributes to the moral interpretation: the stronger the sensual seduction, the greater the need for a moral warning. The interest in and careful representation of "inverted" gendered behaviour does not mean that the artists approved of it. Certain pictorial marks suggest a negative interpretation or a warning. These markers may have been applied in order to prevent sinful sexual behaviour; nevertheless, they are not just killers of eroticism. Overall an interest in the erotic was important for the early modern depictions of the myth, and it appeared in many shades from heterosexuality to male homosexual paedophilia. A noteworthy feature of the early modern representations is the fact that the visual artists widely explored the field of male homosexual eroticism.

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## The Sleeping Nymph Revisited: Ekphrasis, *Genius Loci* and Silence

Barbara Baert

By the end of the fifteenth century, Michael Fabricius Ferrarinus (died sometime between 1488 and 1493), prior of the Carmelite cloister in Reggio Emilia, had launched in his *Chronicle* (ca. 1477–1484) the rumour that ‘super ripam Danuvii’ a fountain had been found with an ancient sculpture of a sleeping nymph. According to Ferrarinus, the ensemble bore a peculiar *tetrastichon* epigraph:

HUIUS NYMPHA LOCI, SACRI CUSTODIA FONTIS,  
DORMIO, DUM BLANDAE SENTIO MURMUR AQUAE.  
PARCE MEUM, QUISQUIS TANGIS CAUA MARMORA, SOMNUM  
RUMPERE. SIVE BIBAS SIVE LAVERE TACE.

Otto Kurz, Millard Meiss, Michael Liebmann, Leonard Barkan, Zita Ágota Pataki, Franz Matsche, and Matthias Müller have all discussed the impact of this rumour as prototypical for the Renaissance sculptures of the sleeping nymph in Rome and for the development of the well-known genre of the sleeping Venus in painting.<sup>1</sup> Building on their work, this essay contextualises the phenomenon of the sleeping nymph and its textual and artistic *Nachleben*

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- 1 Kurz O., “Huius Nympha Loci: A Pseudo-Classical Inscription and a Drawing by Dürer”, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 16 (1953) 171–177; Meiss M., “Sleep in Venice: Ancient Myths and Renaissance Proclivities”, *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 110, 5 (1966) 348–382; Liebmann M., “On the Iconography of the Nymph of the Fountain by Lucas Cranach the Elder”, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 31 (1968) 434–437; Barkan L., “The Beholder’s Tale: Ancient Sculpture, Renaissance Narratives”, *Representations* 44 (1993) 133–166; Pataki Z.A., “Wechselbeziehungen zwischen Bild und Text am Beispiel von Lucas Cranachs ruhender Quellnymphe”, in Weber W. (ed.), *Wissenswelten. Perspektiven der neuzeitlichen Informationskultur* (Augsburg: 2003) 115–133; Matsche F., “Nympha super ripam Danubii’: Cranachs Quellnympfen und ihr Vorbild”, in Tacke A. (ed.), *Lucas Cranach 1553/2003* (Leipzig: 2007) 159–204; Müller M., “Von der allegorischen Historia zur Historisierung eines germanischen Mythos: die Bedeutung eines Italienischen Bildkonzepts für Cranachs Schlafende Quellnymphe”, in Hoppe S. – Müller M. – Nußbaum N. (eds.), *Stil als Bedeutung*

from the point of view of the *locus amoenus* as silence. Combining an iconological, an aesthetic-philosophical and an anthropological approach, this essay contributes to a better understanding of sleep, voyeurism, and silence within the context of the nymph's particular *genius loci*.

### The Birth of an Artistic Motif: *Status Quaestionis*

In 1512, a sculpture of a sleeping, half-naked woman and part of an antique fountain were discovered and displayed in the Belvedere of the Vatican [Fig. 4.1]. We know about the sculpture and the way it was set up because of a drawing by Francisco de Holanda (1517–1585) from 1539 [Fig. 4.2].<sup>2</sup> Today the sculpture of this woman lying in the niche of a cave is considered to be Ariadne. At the time, it was thought to represent Cleopatra.<sup>3</sup> Both the setting and the pose of the scantily clad goddess refer to the then current genre of nymphean sculpture, a prototype of which was reportedly located on the banks of the Danube. The alleged group of sculptures on the Danube bore a Latin epigram. The epigram was included in a compilation by Michael Fabricius Ferrarinus, prior of the Carmelite cloister in Reggio Emilia. Ferrarinus writes: 'Super ripam Danuvii in quo est sculpta nympha ad amoenum fontem dormiens, sub figura est hoc epigramma.' ('On the banks of the Danube there is a sculpture of a sleeping nymph at a beautiful spring and under the image is also an epigram.')

<sup>4</sup> The epigram reads:

Huius nympha loci, sacri custodia fontis,  
Dormio, dum blandae sentio murmur aquae.

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in der nordalpinen Renaissance. Wiederentdeckung einer methodischen Nachbarschaft (Regensburg: 2008) 160–187.

- 2 MacDougall E.B., "The Sleeping Nymph: Origins of a Humanist Fountain Type", *The Art Bulletin* 57, 3 (1975) 357–365. The drawing of the Cleopatra fountain by Francisco de Holanda is located in the Escorial Ms. A/E ij 6, fol. 8; see MacDougall, fig. 1. See also: MacDougall E.B., *Fountains, Statues and Flowers. Studies in Gardens of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Washington: 1994) 37.
- 3 Brummer H.H., *The Statue Court in the Vatican Belvedere*, Stockholm Studies in the History of Art 20 (Stockholm: 1970) 154; Amelung W., *Die Sculpturen des Vaticanischen Museums*, vol. 1 (Berlin: 1903) 636, n. 414.
- 4 Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, ms. lat. 6128, fol. 114; Reggio, Biblioteca Comunale, cod. c. 398, fol. 28. The manuscript from Paris is dated after 1477; Reggio's manuscript is dated 1486. All translations are mine if not indicated otherwise.



FIGURE 4.1 Ariadne, previously known as the Cleopatra fountain (found in 1512), Rome, Vatican Museum.



FIGURE 4.2 *Francisco de Holanda, Drawing of the so-called Cleopatra Fountain at the Belvedere (1539). Madrid, Escorial.*

Parce meum, quisquis tangis cava marmora, somnum  
Rumpere. Sive bibas, sive lavere tace.<sup>5</sup>

Nymph of this place, these sacred springs I keep,  
And to the murmur of these waters sleep;  
Ah spare my slumbers, gently tread the cave!  
And drink in silence, or in silence leave.<sup>6</sup>

When the sleeping goddess was discovered at the Belvedere, those in Rome realised its connection to this *passus*, according to a poem by Evangelista Maddaleni Fausto di Capodiferro (second half of the fifteenth century – 1527) written for Pope Julius II in 1513: ‘Fessa soporifero Fontis susurro / Perspicui, dulcis frigidulique fruor;/ Accedas tacitus, tacitusque lavere bibasque.’<sup>7</sup> The connection between the sleeping nymph in a cave and the fascinating *tetrastichon* about silence and water was a beloved motif in sixteenth-century Roman gardens and fountains.<sup>8</sup> Angelo Colocci (1474–1549) used the epigram on one of his fountains for the court of Pope Leo X, which can still be seen on a woodcut featuring it [Fig. 4.3].<sup>9</sup>

Where did this *topos* come from? And what is the origin of the epigram? Elisabeth MacDougall points out that an excerpt of the epigram had circulated prior to Ferrarinus, in a compilation made by Bartolomeo della Fonte (1446–1513).<sup>10</sup> Della Fonte adds to the poem that it was ‘recently composed in

- 5 The epigram appears in the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* (CIL), Berlin, 1863–1940, vol. V, no. CIL VI/5, 3<sup>\*e</sup>.
- 6 The motif even inspired actual searches – quests – for the site on the banks of the Danube; Saxl F., “A Heathenish Fountain in St. Wolfgang”, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 1, 2 (1937) 182–183; Wuttke D., “Zu Huius nympha loci”, *Arcadia. Zeitschrift für vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft* 3 (1968) 306–307; Matsche, “Nympha super ripam Danubii” 176 believes the epigram is located at a nymph spring erected in Buda for King Matthias Corvinus of Hungary (1443–1490). See also Pataki Z.A., *Nympha ad amoenum fontem dormiens* (CIL VI/ 5, 3<sup>\*e</sup>). *Ekphrasis oder Herrscherallegorese? Studien zu einem Nymphenbrunnen sowie zur Antikenrezeption und zur politischen Ikonographie am Hof des ungarischen Königs Matthias Corvinus*, Ph.D. dissertation, 2 vols. (Stuttgart: 2005).
- 7 Brummer, *The Statue Court in the Vatican Belvedere* 221. The connection between the two epigrams was made in Kurz, “Huius Nympha Loci” 174–175.
- 8 Praschniker C. – Kenner H., *Der Bäderbezirk von Virunum* (Vienna: 1947) 79–81.
- 9 MacDougall, “The Sleeping Nymph” 357; Boissard Jean Jacques, *Romanae Urbis Topographiae*, 3 vols. (Frankfurt, Theodor de Bry: 1597–1602) part VI, fig. 25 shows a woodprint of the relief with the inscription in the garden of Angelo Colocco, dated before 1515.
- 10 MacDougall, “The Sleeping Nymph” 358; Kurz, “Huius Nympha Loci” 172. The epigram was a very popular genre at this time, due, amongst other things, to the influence of the Greek





FIGURE 4.3 *Relief with Sleeping Nymph in the Garden of Angelo Colocci (before 1515).*  
*In Boissard Jean Jacques, Romanae Urbis Topographiae, 3 vols. (Frankfurt,*  
*Theodor de Bry: 1597–1602).*

Rome. It is by Campano.<sup>11</sup> Ovid references nymph springs and the silence of the water several times. In his *Fasti* III, 11–20, he describes Rhea Sylvia as a girl that sweetly dozes off with her urn to the sound of the softly ‘murmuring water’ (‘murmur blandae aquae’).<sup>12</sup>

Not only the type of verse was *en vogue*, the figure of the nymph was also regaining popularity. With Giovanni Boccaccio’s (1313–1375) *Ninfale fiesolano* (1340, printed in Venice in 1488), and Francesco Colonna’s *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* (1499) she emerged as a subject within the revival of ancient literature and poetry.<sup>13</sup> The *Hypnerotomachia* describes and illustrates the relief between two pillars of an octagonal building as Venus’ fountain [Fig. 4.4]. The illustration shows a half-covered nymph lying on the ground. According to the text, the water coming from one breast was hot, the water from the other was cool, and it was caught in a porphyry pitcher. A satyr discovers her while two satyr children hold snakes and urns. Contemporaries of the Cleopatra fountain in Rome clearly saw the connection with the *Hypnerotomachia*, as can be seen in

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*Anthology*, which had just been rediscovered. Today, when we speak of the *Anthology* we refer to a combination of two collections of Greek poems: the *Anthology of Planudes* and the *Palatine Anthology*. The *Anthology of Planudes* (named after the editor, Maximos Planudes) had already been printed in an *editio princeps* in 1494 by Ianus Lascaris. The collection’s autograph is located in Venice (codex Marcianus gr. 481). Until 1606, this was known as the “Greek Anthology”. In 1606, the *Palatine Anthology* was found in Heidelberg in the Bibliotheca Palatina (hence the name) by Claude Saumaise (Salmasius). The manuscript eventually returned to Heidelberg in the early nineteenth century via Rome and Paris (Codex Palatinus 23), although part of it was left behind in Paris (Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Parisinus Suppl. gr. 384). For more on the reception history and the literary influence of the *Anthology* in general see Hutton J., *The Greek Anthology in Italy to the Year 1800* (New York: 1935) and Hutton J., *The Greek Anthology in France and in the Latin Writers of the Netherlands to the Year 1800* (New York: 1946). For more on the important role that the Greek scholar Ianus Lascaris played in disseminating the *Anthology* of Planudes, see also Lauxtermann M.D., “Janus Lascaris and the Greek Anthology” in Beer S. de – Enenkel K.A.E. – Rijser D. (eds.), *The Neo-Latin Epigram. A Learned and Witty Genre* (Leuven: 2009) 41–65.

- 11 Florence, Biblioteca Riccardiana, cod. 907, fol. 172: ‘Romae recens inventum. Campani est’ MacDougall, “The Sleeping Nymph” 358, n. 15.
- 12 The entire poem is cited in MacDougall, “The Sleeping Nymph” n. 20.
- 13 Calera E., *La poesia pastorale* (Milan: 1909) 170–180; Colonna Francesco, *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* (Venice, Aldus Manutius: 1499); annotations in Colonna Francesco, *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, ed. L.A. Ciapponi – G. Pozzi, 2 vols. (Padua: 1964; reprint, Padua: 1980); Colonna Francesco, *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, ed. M. Ariani – M. Gabriele (Milan: 1998; reprint, n.p.: 2004; reprint, n.p.: 2010); MacDougall, “The Sleeping Nymph” 361.



FIGURE 4.4 Francesco Colonna, *Nymph spring from the Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* (Venice: 1499). Woodcut.



a letter from Pico della Mirandola (1463–1494) to Lilio Gregorio Giraldi (1479–1552). Pico says that the Cleopatra also sprays water from her breasts.<sup>14</sup>

The sleeping nymphs belong to a typological group. They are all half-reclining, their head resting on one arm, legs crossed at the ankles or lower leg. This was in fact the ancient convention for indicating sleep.<sup>15</sup> Two myths provide the basis of the motif of the sleeping nymph near a spring of river-bank. Amydone was attacked by a satyr, but saved and seduced by Neptune; Byblis was transformed into a water nymph as punishment for her incestuous love for her brother.<sup>16</sup> Gradually, the sleeping pose on riverbanks or near springs became an erotic *topos*.<sup>17</sup> Women in this pose were called ἀναπαυόμεναι (“anapauomenai”).<sup>18</sup>

Besides the pose, the setting in the cave was also a constant in the typology. It is well known that ancient nymphs were worshipped in caves as their *domus nympharum*.<sup>19</sup> The Roman *nymphaeum* or the architectural fountain also originated from these natural grottoes with their chambers, shafts and water sources that were said to have been created by nymphs. In the underground tunnels and chambers, nymphs were visited and worshipped at small altars, a practice attested to by both Pausanias and Pliny the Elder.<sup>20</sup>

Elisabeth MacDougall asks where the sudden popularity of this nymph fountain (in Rome) came from. The *Hypnerotomachia* certainly had an impact on both the style as well as the erotic-humanist perception of those sites. According to MacDougall, the site-specific use of image groups forms the core

14 ‘Cleopatrae, cuius quasi de mammis destillat fons vetustorum instar aqueductuum’; cf. MacDougall, “The Sleeping Nymph” 361, n. 50.

15 Kapossy B., *Brunnenfiguren der hellenistischen und römischen Zeit* (Zurich: 1969) 18.

16 Ciapponi L.A. – Pozzi G., “La cultura figurativa di Francesco Colonna e l’arte veneta”, *Lettere italiane* 14 (1962) 151–169, here 160; Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, ed. and trans. M. D’Hane-Scheltema (Amsterdam: 2013) II, 240 for Amydone, and IX, 452 for Byblis.

17 Sextus Propertius describes his mistress lying on the banks like Ariadne; Propertius, *Elegies*, trans. H.E. Butler, Loeb Classical Library (London: 1924) 9.

18 Dilthey K., “Archäologische Streifzüge, I: Über zwei Gemälde des Aristides”, *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* 25 (1870) 151–158; Birt T., “Die Vatikanische Ariadne und die dritte Elegie des Properz”, *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* 50 (1895) 31–65, 161–190; MacDougall, “The Sleeping Nymph” 360.

19 Virgil in his *Aeneis* often references it, such as in I, 166–168: ‘intus aquae dulces vivoque sedilia saxo / Nympharum domus’.

20 Walker S., *Roman Nymphaea in the Greek World* (London: 1987); Elderkin G.W., “The Natural and the Artificial Grotto”, *Hesperia* 10 (1941) 125–137.

of the *réveil*.<sup>21</sup> It is well known that the gardens of humanists such as Angelo Colocci were used to organise gatherings of *literati*.<sup>22</sup> They called these meetings academies.<sup>23</sup> The use of a garden as the most suitable place and space for artistic and intellectual gatherings dates back to Plato.<sup>24</sup> Plato's academics met in a cave in the garden with a shrine to the nymphs and the muses.<sup>25</sup> Nymphs were considered muses and muses had nymph-like qualities, for they were mostly seen near water and springs.<sup>26</sup> It seems that the academies of Rome – just as those in Florence and Naples –<sup>27</sup> were based on this intellectual usage as a form of ancient *aemulatio*.

Millard Meiss begins his important study *Sleep in Venice* by discussing the popularity of a specific nymph motif in the pictorial arts around 1500, for example in the work of Giorgione (Dresden, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister; ca. 1508/1510) [Fig. 4.5] and Lucas Cranach the Elder [Fig. 4.6].<sup>28</sup> Giorgione's painting was entitled *Sleeping Venus*.<sup>29</sup> However, ancient Venuses were never pictured sleeping and the Greco-Roman literary tradition never connects Venus with this position or setting.<sup>30</sup> Meiss discovers Giorgione's prototype of the Venus in Francesco Colonna's *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, where the sleeping nymph is described and introduced. Second, Meiss connects the Giorgione motif with the epigram from Ferrarinus's collection previously discussed by MacDougall. The connection between the epigram and the sleeping nymph has already been seen by scholars of

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- 21 Bober P.P., "The Coryciana and the Nymph Corycia", *The Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 40 (1977) 223–239.
  - 22 Ubaldini F., *Vita de Mons. Angelo Colocci. Studi e testi*, ed. V. Fanelli (Vatican: 1969) 38–60; on the use of the gardens, see also: Gnoli D., "Orti letterari al tempo di Leo X", *Nuova antologia*, January 16th (1930) 28–29; Gioia C.P., *Gli orti colocciani in Roma* (Foligno: 1893).
  - 23 Mayländer M., *Storia delle accademie d'Italia*, vol. 4 (Bologna: 1930) 320–327; Pade M. (ed.), *On Renaissance Academies* (Rome: 2011).
  - 24 Marrou H.-I., *Histoire de l'éducation dans l'antiquité* (Paris: 1955) 261–263.
  - 25 Boyancé P., "Le culte des Muses chez les philosophes grecs: Études d'histoire et de psychologie religieuses", *Bibliothèque des écoles françaises d'Athènes et de Rome* 141 (1937) 260–267.
  - 26 Otto W.F., *Die Musen und der göttliche Ursprung des Singens und Sagens* (Düsseldorf – Cologne: 1956) 20.
  - 27 Delle Torre A., *Storia dell'Accademia platonica di Firenze* (Florence: 1902).
  - 28 See also the unpublished dissertation: Nakov A., *La nymphe couchée*, Ph.D. dissertation (Paris: 1969).
  - 29 'Her tranquility is enhanced by the utter silence of the lush, peaceful landscape, which echoes the rhythms of her outlines.' Meiss, "Sleep in Venice" 350.
  - 30 Brinkerhoff D.M., "Hypotheses on the History of the Crouching Aphrodite type in Antiquity", *The J. Paul Getty Museum Journal* 6/7 (1978/1979) 83–96.



FIGURE 4.5 *Giorgione, Sleeping Venus (ca. 1508/10). Oil on canvas, 108,5 × 175 cm. Dresden, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister.*



FIGURE 4.6 Lucas Cranach the Elder, *Sleeping Nymph at the Spring* (ca. 1518), Oil on canvas, 59 × 92 cm. Leipzig, Museum der Bildenden Künste.



drawing and graphic arts. Otto Kurz in his 1953 article “Huius Nympha Loci” was the first to make the connection between the famous epigram and Albrecht Dürer’s drawing of the sleeping nymph at the Museum of Art History Vienna (1514) [Fig. 4.7].<sup>31</sup> The inscription on the stone fountain in the painting is indeed the same epigram.

### Hear No Evil, See No Evil, Speak No Evil

The sleeping nymph and her epigram had an aesthetic and theoretical impact on various media. In the following, I discuss *paragone* and *ekphrasis*, as well as the role of the audience, the meaning of *solitudo* during the viewing process, and the female nude as a genre.

In *The Beholder’s Tale*, Leonard Barkan discusses the HUIUS NYMPHA LOCI epigram and its impact upon *paragone*.<sup>32</sup> According to Barkan, the inscription by Michael Fabricius Ferrarinus is paradoxical for three reasons. First, the statue of the nymph addresses the audience. But at the same time, the statue says it must be left alone for its image to effectively unfold. There is a tension between the speech that animates, and the viewing, which de-animates. This tension brings to mind Leon Battista Alberti’s description of the effect of “istoria” (or the painterly arts): “[...] with ferocious expression and forbidding glance challenges (the viewers) not [to] come near, as if he wished their business to be secret”.<sup>33</sup> The image, *in concreto* the nymph, is aware it/she is being watched. Yet it/she still asks for silence and thus suggests something mysterious – a secret – that needs to be preserved.

The viewer-voyeur who wants to uncover the mystery is on sacred ground here: this is a place of eternity rather than a place of temporality, and there is a connection to the motif of silence. The sculpture sleeps and at the same time asks the visitor to be quiet (thus it/she speaks from its/her resting state). The second paradox is that waking the nymph would mean bringing her to life, but waking her would also destroy the eternal nature of the artistic place of leisure. The viewer – voyeur, traveller, (art) lover – encounters the nymph during his travels, and is possibly surprised by the place, perhaps even thrilled to

31 Kurz, “Huius Nympha Loci” 171–177; The drawing is in the *Kunstbuch Albrechten Dürers von Nürnberg* at the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, Kunstkammer, inv. no. 5127, fol. 35, no. L. 415. For the date of the drawing, see Strauss W.L., *The Complete Drawings of Albrecht Dürer*, 6 vols. (New York: 1974) vol. 3, 1462.

32 Barkan, “The Beholder’s Tale”.

33 Barkan, “The Beholder’s Tale” 146.



FIGURE 4.7 Albrecht Dürer, *Drawing of a sleeping Nymph at a spring* (1514). Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Kunstkammer, inv. no. 5127, fol. 35, no. L415.



FIGURE 4.8 Michelangelo, *Night* (ca. 1520–1536). Marble, 155 × 150 cm. Florence, San Lorenzo, Medici Chapel.

find this woman so subdued. He is, however, immediately alerted to the impossibility of getting to know her, because complete restraint is insisted upon. In essence, the visitor is an intruder. That is the third paradox, defining the place as a spot not for human viewing. The sacred place of the nymph – her own habitat and *Gefühlsraum* –<sup>34</sup> is an *anti-locus*, because it must remain unknown (and unseen) by humans, untainted by their footsteps. I discuss the rich term *Gefühlsraum* in more detail below.

A related problematization of the relationship between art and its audience is found in the poetic epigrams that Giovan Battista Strozzi (1504–1571) composed for Michelangelo's *Night* [Fig. 4.8].<sup>35</sup>

34 Hermann Schmitz uses this term (the 'space of feelings') to refer to the philosophical locus of emotions as they stretch between extend between the subject and the world. See Schmitz H., "Der Gefühlsraum", in Schmitz H. (ed.), *System der Philosophie*, 3 vols. (Bonn: 1981) vol. 3, 264–276.

35 Quoted in Barkan, "The Beholder's Tale" 148–149. Translation by L. Barkan.

La Notte, che tu vedi in sì dolci atti  
 Dormire, fu da un Angelo scolpita  
 In questo sasso: e, perchè dorme, ha vita:  
 Destala, se no 'l credi, e parleratti.

Night which you see sleeping in such a lovely attitude was sculpted by an Angel in this stone; and because she sleeps, she lives. Disturb her, if you don't believe it, and she will speak to you.

Michelangelo promptly replied to Strozzi's quatrain with the following verses:

Grato mi è il sonno, e più l'esser di sasso:  
 Mentre che il danno e la vergogna dura,  
 Non veder, non sentir, m'è gran ventura;  
 Però non mi destar; deh parla basso!

Sleep is pleasing to me, and being made of stone is more so, while injury and shame endure. Not to see, not to feel are my good fortune; therefore don't disturb me, please, speak softly.

The poem declares that watching a sleeping being demands sacred respect and ritualistic behaviour. Furthermore, sleep is a metaphor for the reserved nature of the artist: the elusiveness and intimacy (in this case expressed by sculpture in the medium of stone) which by definition constitutes unavailability. Or is that not the case? This brings me to the problem of *ekphrasis*.

Zita Ágota Pataki specifically examines the meaning of the HUIUS NYMPHA LOCI epigram, as it was included in Albrecht Dürer's drawing (1514).<sup>36</sup> The epigram is of course a *tetrastichon* layered with *ekphrasis*. It is a perfect example of the ancient principle of "Ut pictura poesis". Horace refers to Simonides of Ceos who declared that painting is like a silent poem and that poetry is a painting in the form of words.<sup>37</sup> Simonides of Ceos verbally encourages an artistic response. The text cannot replace the imagery, but it does generate a 'künstlerische Umsetzung' ('artistic realisation').<sup>38</sup> The HUIUS NYMPHA LOCI epigram in a certain sense overrules the image, as it informs the audience of

36 Pataki, "Wechselbeziehungen zwischen Bild und Text".

37 Lessing G.E., *Laokoon oder über die Grenzen der Malerei und Poesie* (Stuttgart: 1964) 4; Agamben G., *Image et mémoire. Écrits sur l'image, la danse et le cinéma* (Paris: 2004) 147–151.

38 Pataki, "Wechselbeziehungen zwischen Bild und Text" 122.



the nymph's state of mind. The epigram addresses the viewer directly on behalf of the nymph. This is something else that the imagery, with its strictly visual language, cannot do.<sup>39</sup>

It is characteristic of *ekphrasis* that it can describe both real and fictional subjects. In the case of the epigram, what is reality and what is fiction has been kept very vague.<sup>40</sup> First, the epigram evokes, as is well-known, countless ancient stories of sleeping nymphs that the viewer will be reminded of, leaving the artist with a certain amount of artistic freedom.

Second, the medium of sculpture makes the viewer part of the setting and the surroundings as *locus amoenus*, ideally the Arcadian garden.<sup>41</sup> Sculpture expands the *ekphrasis* of the HUIUS NYMPHA LOCI to a broader register of senses. 'I sleep while listening to the gentle murmurs of the water', is what the nymph is made to say. The nymph sleeps but is still listening: she is still on guard. She is of course the ancient *custodia* of the springs. She possesses all possible senses: she is indeed sensuous and thus truly and actually present.<sup>42</sup>

Finally, the epigram generates a number of *topoi* connected to *mimesis*. The *mimesis* should carry the arts away to the outermost boundaries of reality, so that the boundary of what is truly real is crossed.<sup>43</sup> *Mimesis* of this kind results in the best likenesses and thus the ecstasy and enchantment of illusion, with Zeuxis' story as the prototype. Parrhasius of Ephesus (440–385 BC in Athens) challenged Zeuxis, who painted a bunch of grapes so realistically that birds were drawn to it. Parrhasius then painted a curtain over his painting that was so realistic that Zeuxis tried to brush it aside.<sup>44</sup> The HUIUS NYMPHA LOCI epigram turns the sculpted nymph into a similarly souled, "speaking" illusion which challenges the senses of the viewer. Moreover, the viewer feels compromised by looking at a half-naked sleeping woman and the possible urge it

39 Ibidem 121.

40 Ibidem.

41 See ibidem 123, n. 16 for a list of similar garden ensembles.

42 Ibidem 123.

43 *Mimesis* begets *similitudo* and *simulatio*, cf. the story about Apelles in Pliny, *Natural History*, Volume IX: Books 33–35, Loeb Classical Library, trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge, 1952), XXXV 79–100: When Apelles went to visit the painter Protogenes on the island of Rhodes and found that the painter was not at home, he drew a fine line on a panel that he found there. When Protogenes came home, he recognised the work of Apelles and used a different colour to paint an even finer line than the one Apelles had drawn. When Apelles visited again and Protogenes was once again not there, he used a third colour to draw a line so fine that it would be impossible to beat when it came to fineness.

44 Kunze D., *The Art 3 Idea: A Third Way to Study Art* (Pennsylvania: 2000) *passim*.

might awaken in him to disturb this woman, thereby crossing the line of something that is expressly forbidden (a taboo): waking her fully.

### *Genius Loci and the Hermeneutics of Silence and Solitudo*

In Bomarzo, near Rome, Vicino Orsini (1523–1584) founded the so-called *sacro bosco* or *parco dei Mostri* between 1552 and 1580.<sup>45</sup> It was a mysterious place where nature became one with sculptures of monsters, gods, and fantasy creatures.<sup>46</sup> The park naturally did not lack a sleeping nymph [Fig. 4.9].<sup>47</sup> Visitors found themselves in a dream world and were confronted with mysterious artworks. Strolling around and discovering these spirited creatures was similar to Poliphilo's experience. It was a *locus amoenus* that sought contact with the chthonic underworld. The nymph here is a *meraviglia*. For centuries she had been allowed to rest here, becoming one with nature. She lied buried under her protective layer of moss, just like Echo's body slowly and sclerotically merging with the rocks.

The rocks, springs, caves and woods venerated from the earliest historic times are still today, in different forms, held as sacred. But what the continuity of sacred places in fact indicates is the autonomy of hierophanies, manifestations of the sacred. The sacred expresses itself according to the laws of its own dialectic and this expression comes to man from without. If the "choice" of his sacred places was left to man, then there could be no explanation for this continuity.<sup>48</sup>

Mircea Eliade suggests that the sacredness of places escapes human beings. It is paradoxically handed down to them from above, given to them through a hierophany, through a flash of the divine that breaks through in a certain place. The nymph, as a being somewhere between gods and humans, is also tasked with the special continuity of the sacred place. The nymph rests on banks and

45 Roccasecca P., *Ricerca sul lessico di parchi e giardini* (Rome: 1990), with bibliography 213–215, terminology 219, index 223–228; Roccasecca P., "Nota metodologica sul lessico di parchi e giardini di interesse storico", in Cazzato V. (ed.), *Tutela dei Giardini storici. Bilanci e prospettive* (Rome: 1989) 256–262.

46 See also the Wayford Woods, a thirty-acre natural heritage site in Somerset (England), where doors and figurines started popping up between the trees as if placed there by fairies. Those little doors were actually installed by locals for children to leave messages for the fairies.

47 Bredekamp H., *Vicino Orsini und der Heilige Wald von Bomarzo. Ein Fürst als Künstler und Anarchist*, 2 vols. (Worms: 1985) vol. 2, 177.

48 Eliade M., *Patterns in Comparative Religion* (New York: 1954) 369.



FIGURE 4.9 Vicino Orsini, Sacro Bosco with sleeping nymph (ca. 1552–1580). Sculpture. Bomarzo, Sacro Bosco.

in grottoes, in an unspoilt nature that brims with mystery and desire, being her own *genius loci*.<sup>49</sup>

According to Richard Broxton Onians, the Latin *lympa* / *lymphatus* refers not only to the element of water, but also to panic, fear, stupefaction and even insanity. The etymological explanation of *lymphatus* / *lymphaticus* is that persons who *saw* a nymph or water spirit went mad. The nymph is related to *hydrophobia* and *lymphatus* refers primarily to a ‘crazy fear’ caused by something liquid.<sup>50</sup>

49 Patterson B., *The Art of Conversation with the Genius Loci* (Taunton: 2005).

50 Cf. Pliny, *Natural History*, Volume VII: Books 24–27, Loeb Classical Library, trans. W.H.S. Jones, A.C. Andrews (Cambridge, 1956), xxiv 164: ‘hac pota lymphari homines’. In fact, ingested liquids such as water, wine, or blood were believed to go to the lungs (the substance of life-generating *pneuma*). Onians R.B., *The Origins of European Thought. About the Body, the Mind, the Soul, the World, Time and Fate* (Cambridge: 1998) 35, 66–67, 219–220. 35, n. 5: ‘*Lymphati* are people who are in a frantic state of mind: *commota mente*. And *νυμφόληπτος* to which some refer (if *νύμφη* meant a spirit of water or plant sap) would describe the inspiring effects of drinking, of the *perfundere*’. The muses, Camienae and Carmentis were indeed water nymphs’. 66: ‘*Lymphari* could thus mean ‘to be frenzied’, to be possessed by such power’. 67: ‘A poem was water, honey or nectar of the muses,

In the following, I take a closer look at the hermeneutics of the *genius loci*, investigating what the nymph embodies at a deeper level, and how the motif of the sleeping nymph has ancient intuitive patterns locked within it. In addition to cultural anthropology, I make use of the latest sensorium research on the one hand and new work on silence on the other.<sup>51</sup> In *Atmospheres: Aesthetics of Emotional Spaces*, Tonino Griffero defines the *genius loci* as a *mysterium tremendum*, as a 'faint shiver', a power that surprises, space that becomes place.<sup>52</sup> Rudolf Otto writes about this ambivalent sensation that is of something sacred and at the same time untouchable and unreachable:

The feeling of it may pervade the mind with a tranquil mood of deepest worship. It may pass over into a more set and lasting attitude of the soul, continuing, as it were, thrillingly vibrant and resonant, until at last it dies away.<sup>53</sup>

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which are spring-spirits from which drank poets at Parnassus'. 219–220, n. 7: 'A "nymph" appears to have been the ψυχή, the reproductive life, in a tree etc. In the earliest evidence, the Iliad, νύμφαι are usually clearly identified with water, springs etc. *Lympha* seems akin. The water-goddesses are givers of fertility among the Celts. νύμφη also described a bride or marriageable girl (cf. νυμφεύω, "to marry"). For the Persians, the tutelary spirit of the female sex was the spirit of water, Anahita.' There is also the story of H. Dymphna van Geel (degeneration of Nympha, Lympha), a recluse who lived in the the seventh century and who wandered near water and in woods and was declared the patron saint of the "mad", see Mulder-Bakker A., "Woudvrouwen: Ierse prinsessen als kluizenaresen in de Nederlanden", *Tijdschrift voor sociale geschiedenis* 20 (1994) 1–23.

- 51 Beth Williamson has a great overview of these recent hermeneutic turns in art history: Williamson B., "Sensory Experience in Medieval Devotion: Sound and Vision, Invisibility and Silence", *Speculum. A Journal of Medieval Studies* 88, 1 (2013) 1–43; See also Palazzo E., "Les cinq sens au Moyen Âge: État de la question et perspectives de recherche", *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale* 55 (2012) 339–366; Palazzo E., *L'invention chrétienne des cinq sens dans la liturgie et l'art au Moyen Âge* (Paris: 2014); Palazzo E., "Le visible, l'invisible et les cinq sens dans le haut Moyen Âge: A propos de l'iconographie de l'ivoire de Francfort", in *Materialité et immatérialité dans l'église au Moyen Âge. Actes du colloque organisé par Le Centre d'Etudes Médiévales de l'Université de Bucarest* (Bucarest: 2012) 11–38; Cole J., "A Neuroscientific Perspective on Medieval Intimacies", *Postmedieval. A Journal of Medieval Cultural Studies* 3, 4 (2012) 461–466.
- 52 Griffero T., *Atmospheres. Aesthetics of Emotional Spaces* (Farnham: 2014) 73. See also: Kuhlmann D., "Der Geist des (W)ortes", *Wolkenkuckucksheim* 3, 2 (1998) [[http://www.cloud-cuckoo.net/openarchive/wolke/deu/Themen/982/Kuhlmann/kuhlmann\\_t.html](http://www.cloud-cuckoo.net/openarchive/wolke/deu/Themen/982/Kuhlmann/kuhlmann_t.html)].
- 53 Otto R., *The Idea of the Holy. An Inquiry Into the Non-rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and Its Relation to the Rational* (Oxford: 1936) 12.

The *genius loci* is like a ‘mystery forming an atmospheric tissue.’<sup>54</sup> It is a *Gefühlsraum* (see above) and thus often involves sensing the aura and *Stimmung* of a certain place as apparently “charged” with a power that makes hierophany impossible. The *genius loci* is a riddle that opens or closes: it requires reverence; it tempts; it is a *mysterium*, but also a *mysterium tremendum*. Just like the nymph on the banks of the Danube.

According to Hermann Schmitz, an important catalyst of a *Gefühlsraum* is silence.<sup>55</sup> Precisely like noise, it signals a change in the external world and acts in an even more immediate, invasive and threatening way than a visual impression, given that its source and vanishing point are impossible to localise. It is thus far from being a mere privation. In fact, it is normal to say ‘a heavy silence fell’ or even a ‘deafening silence’ that one could ‘cut with a knife’, and so on.<sup>56</sup>

In archaic Mediterranean culture, the moment when the sun passes the meridian at its zenith is a sacred taboo. It is the noontime demon.<sup>57</sup> Middy is the anxious moment of transition, of the motionless hour, when everything is enveloped in a net of light and astonishing quiet.<sup>58</sup> There is scarcely a shadow to be seen. Pan is asleep now and all must rest. The landscape is silent, as nature has been struck dumb. The silence acquires the density of a holy place; it becomes a frightening *Gefühlsraum*. And it is precisely in this density that *mysterium tremendum* arises.

In the experience of being possessed by nymphs, the *tremendum* and the *fascinans* reappear together: the marvel, the confoundment, and the feeling of being lost are accompanied by the enchanted and enraptured need to follow the nymphs, to come close and belong to them. The *tremendum* remains hidden in the apparent tameness of their sacred embrace.<sup>59</sup>

In almost all cultures there is an expression relating to the quiet that precedes a storm or a raging wind. It is a silence that measures itself against the power of the wind: it prefigures the immense outburst that is to come. If the wind is a supernatural voice, the silence is its supernatural counterpart. Or, as Sören Kierkegaard puts it: ‘[...] and then, when the sound suddenly ceased, stillness again, almost to the point of anxiety, and the ear grasped in vain for

54 Schmitz, “Der Gefühlsraum” 133.

55 Ibidem 264–276.

56 Griffero, *Atmospheres* 111.

57 Labriolle P. de, “Le démon de midi”, *Bulletin du Cange. Archivum Latinitatis Medii Aevi* 9 (1934) 46–54.

58 Chevalier J. – Gheerbaert A., *Dictionnaire des symboles. Mythes, rêves, coutumes, gestes, formes, figures, couleurs, nombres* (Paris: 1996) 358.

59 Maggini C., “Bad Little Girls”, *Acta Biomed* 79 (2008) 42–51, here 44.

a support in the infinitive.<sup>60</sup> Kierkegaard describes a fearfulness bordering on the mystical. A number of cultures ascribe this sacral silence to the divine, the *epitheton* of God, the *locus* where God can be encountered, hence to the zone or to a medium that allows communication between man and God, between humankind and the world beyond.

So there are different forms of silence.<sup>61</sup> There is the silence that is terrifying: this is *tremendum*, inviting both gods and demons and connected with the planetary shifts such as the zenith, or a necessary interval, such as the solstice.<sup>62</sup> The nymph avails herself of this mystery and thus left subtle traces of it in the epigram that installs her *genius loci* as such. There is also the salutary silence of human beings.<sup>63</sup> Salutary silence is a religiously positive silence: the individual peaceful silence needed for reflection, meditation and contemplation.<sup>64</sup> There is the silence that opens the mind for studying. The mind is opened for the mental eye and the mental ear. This kind of silence for studying is quite

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- 60 Kierkegaard S., *Stages on Life's Way. Studies by Various Persons*, ed. and trans. H.V. Hong – E.H. Hong, Kierkegaard's Writings 11 (Princeton, NJ: 1991) 188.
- 61 Olsen T., *Silences* (New York: 1978) 6, speaks of harmful silences that 'are not natural silences – what John Keats (1795–1821) called "tedious agony" – that necessary time for renewal, lying fallow, gestation, in the natural cycle of creation.' See also Picard M., *The World of Silence* (London: 1948) 141.
- 62 On Pythagorean musical theory and the idea of the break as a cosmic interruption, see Lissa Z., "Aesthetic Functions of Silence and Rests in Music", *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 22, 4 (1964) 443–454; Macho T.H., "Die Kunst der Pause. Eine musikontologische Meditation", *Paragrana. Internationale Zeitschrift für Historische Anthropologie* 2, 1–2 (1993) 104–115, here 105, 113: 'Die ontologisch relevanten Pausen (die rätselhaften Zeropunkte) liegen vor dem Lebensbeginn und nach dem Lebensende [...]. Das Wunder der Oktave besteht eben nicht darin, daß sie den Bauplan des Universums verrät, sondern vielmehr in der Epiphanie der Pause: daß im monotonen und sinnlosen Weltgeräusch ein Wesen auftaucht, das sich selbst irgendwann als die Unterbrechung der Schöpfung hörbar zu werden vermag – als jene existentielle Pause, die – mit Martin Heidegger gesprochen – die Zeit als Horizont des Seins erschließt.' This is the "gorgonian" silence, intangibly terrifying but absolutely necessary in order to allow for the greatest and most dangerous mysteries: to tilt, to clear the way for the sun, the portal, the transit. The solstice goes through the cosmic "throat" which needs the mediation of silence: *angoisse*. Gaignebet C., *À plus haute sens*, vol. 1 (Paris: 1986) 363.
- 63 On the heroic silence of the Ancients, see also: Waddington R.B., "The Iconography of Silence and Chapman's Hercules", *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 33 (1970) 248–263.
- 64 Carruthers M., *The Book of Memory. A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (New York: 1990) 331; Belanoff P., "Silence: Reflection, Literacy, Learning, and Teaching", *College Composition and Communication* 52, 3 (2001) 399–428.

pertinently present in both the ancient as well as the Christian tradition.<sup>65</sup> The sleeping nymph also enjoys that silence and therefore asks this same type of perceptiveness of the viewer, who must concentrate on the secret that can be revealed to him 'in silence',<sup>66</sup> as long as he respects the protective layer of the epigram she has put up around herself and thus turns his urges into a higher contemplation. In the words of Augustine: 'et ista mecum atque adeo tecum, quando in silentio sumus, diligenter cauteque tractabo.'<sup>67</sup> ('I will investigate these matters attentively and carefully with myself and then with you, when we are in silence.').

"Listening with the mind" to the nymph who "speaks" shows an interesting shift in the registers of the *sensorium*. While the "inner eye" is a deep subject in the West,<sup>68</sup> the "inner ear" does not feature as prominently.<sup>69</sup> One finds it in the context of "silent music" as contemplation, and the motif is closely linked to the idea of "the ear of the heart", such as 'Audi, filia, et vide, et inclina aurem tuam' in Psalm 44: 11. The epigram makes the sleeping nymph a creature of silence that hears (internally) and thus remains mentally "receptive". She is alive. The ear (and hearing) can meaningfully be considered a primary sense of the sleeping nymph because there is no mention that the nymph smells, or that she sees, or that she can feel. The nymph is disconnected from all these senses

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- 65 Kamper D. – Wulf C. (eds.), *Schweigen. Unterbrechung und Grenze der menschlichen Wirklichkeit* (Berlin: 1992) 325. On silence as a place of encounter in the monastic context and as a motif (e.g., holding a finger to the lips) of meditation and of the presence of God, see: Pillinger R., "Parola e silenzio nell'arte paleocristiana", in *Silenzio e parola nella patristica*, *Studia Ephemeridis Augustinianum* 127 (Rome: 2012) 685–689; Bagliani A.P., "Il silenzio", *Micrologus. Natura, Scienze e Società Medievali* 18 (2010) VII–XII. See also on 'courtly silence' as a sign of wisdom and etiquette Bock P.K., "'I Think but Dare Not Speak': Silence in Elizabethan Culture", *Journal of Anthropological Research* 32, 3 (1976) 285–294.
- 66 Hahn A., "Secret", in Wulf C. (ed.), *Traité d'anthropologie historique. Philosophes, histoires, cultures* (Paris: 2002) 1151–1164, here 1158: 'Mais, bien souvent, le silence témoigne simplement du fait que l'on est dans l'incapacité de dire quoi que ce soit, et surtout pas un secret'.
- 67 Augustine, *Soliloquiorum libri duo*, trans. P. Remark (Munich: 1951) 1, 30; Capánaga V., "El silencio interior en la visión agustiniana de Ostia", in Cross F.L. (ed.), *Papers Presented to the Fourth International Conference on Patristic Studies*, *Studia patristica* 9 / *Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur* 94 (Berlin: 1966) 359–392.
- 68 Miles M., "Vision. The Eye of the Body and the Eye of the Mind in Saint Augustine's *De Trinitate* and *Confessions*", *The Journal of Religion* 63 (1983) 125–142; see also James L., "Senses and Sensibility in Byzantium", *Art History* 27 (2004) 522–537; Rothstein B., "The Imagination of Imagelessness", in *Sight and Spirituality in Early Netherlandish Painting* (Cambridge: 2005) 49–91.
- 69 Williamson, "Sensory Experience in Medieval Devotion" 5.



because her sleep has dismantled part of her *sensorium* to benefit her hearing: the secret that she evokes in the viewer.

### In Conclusion

In this essay I focused on the rumor that ‘super ripam Danuvii’ a fountain had been found with the ancient sculpture of a sleeping nymph. I contributed to the afterlife and the impact of this *passus* upon this peculiar *genius loci* of the nymph, from an iconological, an aesthetic-philosophical and an anthropological point of view. Iconological studies about the sleeping nymph in painting were first published by Otto Kurz, *Huius Nympha Loci* (1953) and Millard Meiss, *Sleep in Venice* (1966). My approach, however, put forward a typology of the motifs of the sleeping pose and the grotto. I discussed the humanistic *réveil* of this iconography in the context of literary “academies” in gardens and caves. From an aesthetic point of view, I extrapolated the representations of sleeping nymphs in the realm of *ekphrasis* and *paragone*. I see a relationship with the reception history of the poetic epigrams that Giovan Battista Strozzi (1504–1571) composed for Michelangelo’s (1475–1564) *Night*. Finally, I investigated the deeper archetypes of sleep, silence and the cave from an anthropological perspective. The habitat of the nymph is a fantasma for the traveler who is searching for her. Likewise, the artists who painted the nymph’s *locus amoenus* and *meraviglia* considered the pictorial translation of the prototypical rumor as a humanistic challenge and quest.

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## ‘Who, Then, is the “Nympha”?’ An Iconographic Analysis of the Figure of the Maid in the Tornabuoni Frescoes

*Agata Anna Chrzanowska*

Wer also ist die ‘Nympha’? Ihrer leiblichen Realität nach mag sie eine freigelassene tartarische Sklavin gewesen sein ... ihrem wirklichen Wesen nach ist sie ein Elementargeist, eine heidnische Göttin im Exil. Und willst Du ihre Ahnen sehen, so blicke nur auf das Relief unter ihren Füßen.

Who, then, is the ‘Nympha’? As a real being of flesh and blood she may have been a freed slave from Tartary ... but in her true essence she is an elemental sprite, a pagan goddess in exile. If you want to see her ancestors, look at the relief under her feet.<sup>1</sup>

The figure of the maid who enters St. Elisabeth’s room in Ghirlandaio’s *Birth of St. John the Baptist* in the Tornabuoni Chapel [Fig. 5.1] continues to inspire art historians and amateur Renaissance art lovers alike. Aby Warburg, who was truly fascinated by the figure of the girl, identified her as a Florentine nymph and connected the figure’s iconography with a particular series of female representations in Florentine art characterised by similar ethereal drapery and a dancing pose. Warburg defined the iconographic type of the *ninfa fiorentina* in his writings, and the letters he exchanged with his friend André Jolles – gathered in a folder called *Ninfa fiorentina 1900* in the Warburg Archive –<sup>2</sup> lay at the foundations of his concept of the Renaissance nymph. Fascinated by the classical form of the servant girl, Warburg made space for his imagination in these letters, describing the figure as a manifestation of femininity and vitality. The scholar saw in her the incarnation of an ancient goddess who has descended from Mount Olympus to arrive right in the middle of a Florentine bedchamber. Subsequently, the concept of the “nymph” became crucial for Warburg’s analysis of the Florentine painting because these “nymphs” seemed to populate an infinite number of paintings by Lippi, Botticelli, Pollaiuolo,

1 Gombrich E., *Aby Warburg: an Intellectual Biography* (Oxford: 1986) 124.

2 Warburg A., *Ninfa fiorentina 1900*, Warburg Institute Archive, 118.

Ghirlandaio, Donatello and others. Warburg dedicated to the nymph two plates (46 and 47) of his last project, *Mnemosyne*, in which he gathered reproductions of the figure, fragments of poems, prints, classical reliefs and contemporary photographs. The *Mnemosyne* demonstrates the truly heterogeneous nature of the *ninfa fiorentina*, which Warburg identified in the figures of a servant girl, one of the three graces, Judith, Salome, a maenad and an angel.

Warburg's notion of the *ninfa fiorentina* inspired multiple art historical interpretations of the female figure in Western art, from the Renaissance to contemporary times.<sup>3</sup> These investigations address the symbolic qualities of art and focus on exploring Warburg's analytical method and his intellectual horizons. To complement these enquiries into the Warburgian notion of the *ninfa fiorentina* we can carry out an iconographic analysis of the maid figure's meaning within the Tornabuoni cycle, which could help us identify the mysterious nymph. "Who, then, is the 'nympha'?" we could ask, together with Warburg. To answer this question, we should analyse the link between Ghirlandaio's servant and classical nymphs, as suggested by Warburg himself. An investigation of this kind should explain the meaning of the maid figure within the cycle by putting it in dialogue with other scenes in the cycle. Such an analysis could also help us better understand Warburg's fascination with the dancing servant and his notion of the *ninfa fiorentina*. The present study will demonstrate the differences between the iconographic type of the Warburgian *ninfa* and actual representations of nymphs in Renaissance art as well as its relationship to the Florentine tradition of the *Dovizia*. We will also discuss the textual sources that may have inspired the introduction of the motif. The aim is to propose a hermeneutic investigation that rebuilds cultural memory and restores historical substance to the figure of the mysterious girl.

### A Nymph or a *Ninfa Fiorentina*?

Didi-Huberman's recent study on Warburg's *ninfa fiorentina*, entitled *Ninfa fluida: essai sur le drapé-désir*, efficiently describes and analyses the characteristics of the Florentine nymph as theorised by Warburg. Based on an attentive study of Warburg's writings, the scholar distinguishes a set of stylistic features of the figures, which belong to the category of the nymph. In fact, the Warburgian *ninfa* is not distinguished on the basis of semantics but through

3 Didi-Huberman G., *Ninfa fluida. Essai sur le drapé-désir* (Paris: 2015); Didi-Huberman G., *Ninfa moderna. Essai sur le drapé tombé* (Paris: 2002); Baert B., *Nymph. Motif, Phantom, Affect. A Contribution to the Study of Aby Warburg (1866–1929)* (Leuven – Paris – Walpole: 2014).





FIGURE 5.1 *Domenico Ghirlandaio, Birth of St. John the Baptist (1485–1490). Fresco painting. Florence, Santa Maria Novella, Tornabuoni Chapel. Detail.*

a stylistic investigation. One of the Three Graces in Botticelli's *Primavera*, the princess in Donatello's bas-relief *St. George and the Dragon*, and Ghirlandaio's maid have all been identified as *ninfa* figures.<sup>4</sup> These sensual females share similar dancing poses and wear a translucent gown *all'antica* that falls in gentle, well-defined folds. Moreover, Warburg claims that the movement of the figures and the dynamism of their ethereal gowns represent the Lucretian turbulence of the spirit caused by terror or desire.<sup>5</sup>

Voici donc *Ninfa*: non pas seulement une formule iconographique *all'antica*, mais une formule d'intensité capable de faire apparaître, dans une œuvre d'art, tout ce que la vie aurait de mouvant et d'émouvant.<sup>6</sup>

Here, therefore, the *Ninfa*, not only an iconographic formula *all'antica* but a formula of intensity, which is able to make appear in a work of art all what was moving and stirring in life.

Yet Warburg also acknowledged the nymph's classical pedigree and introduced the term *ninfa* based on iconographic evidence linking the form of the dancing girl with classical representations of nymphs. Young girls in dancing poses wearing ethereal gowns populate ancient Roman sarcophagi. In classical mythology, nymphs were not only goddesses of nature and guardians of water springs but also healers and prophetesses. As protectors of water, they were often represented as *kourotrophos* – wet nurses – in service of Dionysus, Zeus, Hermes or Aeneas as infants.<sup>7</sup> We can see an example of this in a relief recorded as part of the Florentine collection of the Peruzzi family in 1752 and now in the Woburn Abbey Collection [Fig. 5.2].<sup>8</sup> It represents a pair of nymphs bathing the new-born Dionysus. Likewise, the Dionysian pedigree of the classical nymphs resulted in many sculptural representations of nymphs in translucent garments assuming dance-like poses following Dionysus or guarding water sources. The Museo Civico in Vicenza, for example, contains a marble statue of a nymph sitting on a rock wearing an almost transparent *chiton* tied under her breast by a *zone*. Her legs are covered by a *himation*, which creates heavy,

4 Didi-Huberman, *Ninfa fluida* 30–36, 41–43, 52–58.

5 Ibidem 90–123.

6 Ibidem 43, my translation.

7 Halm-Tisserant M. – Siebert G., “Nymphai”, in *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae* (LIMC) vol. 8 (1) (Zurich: 1997) 891.

8 Angelicoussis E., *The Woburn Abbey Collection of Classical Antiquities* (Mainz: 1992) 95–96.



FIGURE 5.2  
*Right End of a Dionysian  
 Sarcophagus (ca. 140–160 AD).*  
*Bas-relief, 38,5 × 44,5 cm.*  
*Woburn Abbey Collection.*

plastic folds on her left hip.<sup>9</sup> The Vatican Museums contain a circular marble altar from the Age of Augustus (Greg. Prof. 9940) representing Pan leading a group of nymphs. The goddesses are recognizable by their dancing poses and voluminous robes that fall gently over their bodies.

The Roman tradition was adopted in Christian art and served as a basis for the formation of the sacred iconography. Classical models of birth scenes of Roman gods directly influenced the compositions of the sacred births in Italian art in which we find nymph-*kourotrophos* figures taking care of the holy new-borns. In his *Nativity* scene on the Pisa Baptistry pulpit, Nicola Pisano included the figure of a maid attending Jesus' first bath and pouring water over the baby. Nicola's son, Giovanni, would include a similar figure in his own *Nativity* on the pulpit in the church of Sant'Andrea in Pistoia.<sup>10</sup> Here, the girl leans over and pours the water from a pitcher. The sculptor follows the Roman birth scene model rather closely, as we can see in the aforementioned scene of Dionysus' birth [Fig. 5.2]. The presence of wet nurses in the *Nativity* scenes may be explained by the mention of two midwives by various apocryphal texts. *The Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew*, for example, refers to the presence of Zelomi and Salome beside the Virgin during Christ's birth:

9 Galliazzo V., *Sculture Greche e Romane del Museo Civico di Vicenza* (Treviso: 1976) 68–73.

10 Mellini G.L., *Il pulpito di Giovanni Pisano a Pistoia. Fotografia di Aurelio Amendola* (Milan: 1969) plate 42.

Now, when the birth of the Lord was at hand, Joseph had gone away to seek midwives. And when he had found them, he returned to the cave, and found with Mary the infant which she had brought forth. And Joseph said to the blessed Mary: I have brought thee two midwives, Zelomi and Salome; and they are standing outside before the entrance to the cave, not daring to come in hither, because of the exceeding brightness. And when the blessed Mary heard this, she smiled; and Joseph said to her: Do not smile; but prudently allow them to visit thee, in case thou should require them for thy cure.<sup>11</sup>

We can see how the iconographic tradition from antiquity was adopted by a new religious tradition and linked with different texts. As a consequence, similar motifs expressed different meanings. In this particular case, nymphs-*kourotrophos* became midwives who took care of the Virgin and confirmed her purity and the miraculous nature of her painless birth.

The fact that Ghirlandaio was well acquainted with the iconographic and textual tradition of the wet nurses who attended sacred nativities is confirmed by the *Birth of the Virgin* in the Tornabuoni Chapel [Fig. 5.3]. Here the models from both the Woburn sarcophagus and Giovanni Pisano's pulpit were followed closely. The girl leans over and pours the water from an iron pitcher to prepare Mary's first bath.

The female figure in the *Birth of St. John the Baptist* seems to correspond to some degree to the figure of the wet nurse preparing the bath for the newborn Virgin Mary. However, they perform different actions and, from an iconographical point of view, refer to two different types of ancient nymphs. The wet nurse from the *Birth of the Virgin* repeats the iconographic motif from the classical birth scenes. The servant who carries the fruit and wine into St. Elisabeth's room looks more like a dancing nymph from a Dionysian cortege. The Dionysian pedigree of the figure has allowed scholars to interpret the nymph's presence as the rupture of a figurative order. Her dynamic entrance into a static birth scene taking place in a bourgeois room of a Florentine palace was read as a distressing irruption of Dionysian vitality into the stable, balanced world of a Florentine merchant.<sup>12</sup>

11 "The Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew", in Roberts A. – Donaldson J. (eds.), *The Ante-Nicene Fathers. Translation of the Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325*, vol. 8 (New York: 1916) 374.

12 Didi-Huberman, *Ninfa fluida* 58.



FIGURE 5.3 *Domenico Ghirlandaio, Birth of the Virgin (1485–1490). Fresco painting. Florence, Santa Maria Novella, Tornabuoni Chapel. Detail.*

Aber der Teufel, das ist doch keine Manier, ein Krankenzimmer zu betreten, selbst nicht, wenn man gratulieren will. Diese lebendig leichte, aber so höchst bewegte Weise zu gehen; diese energische Unaufhaltsamkeit, diese Länge vom Schritt, während alle anderen Figuren etwas Unantastbares haben, was soll dies alles? [...] Manchmal kommt es mir vor, als ob das dienende Mädchen anstatt auf den gangbaren Wegen zu laufen, mit beflügelten Füßen den hellen Äther durchschnellt [...].<sup>13</sup>

Hell, is this the way to visit a sickroom, even with congratulations? This lively, light-footed and rapid gait, this irresistible energy, this striding step, which contrasts with the aloof distance of all the other figures, what is the meanings of it all? [...] It sometimes looks to me as if the servant girl rushed with winged feet through the clear ether instead of running on the real ground [...].

13 Gombrich, *Aby Warburg* 107–108, my translation.

It seems that the Warburgian notion of the *ninfa fiorentina* was strongly inspired by the Dionysian interpretation of the nymphean tradition. Even if there are some iconographic parallels between the figure of the maid and the classical nymphs from Dionysius' cortege, its iconography to a greater degree depends on the Florentine tradition of picturing the *Dovizia*, namely the allegory of opulence.

### A *Dovizia* Figure?

In his description of St. Elisabeth's maid in his *Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, Giorgio Vasari emphasises the girl's beauty and admits she brings fruits and wine from the countryside 'according to the Florentine custom'.

[...] finalmente vi è una femmina che porta a la usanza fiorentina frutte e fiaschi da la villa, la quale è molto bella.<sup>14</sup>

[...] finally, there is a woman, who is very beautiful, bringing fruits and flasks from the country, according to the Florentine custom.<sup>15</sup>

Vasari's expression 'che porta all'usanza fiorentina frutte e fiaschi da la villa' may refer to the traditional custom of bringing to town goods produced at a country villa. However, Vasari's words could also suggest that the maid's form refers to the Florentine iconographic tradition of picturing *Dovizia*. In fact, a literal translation from Italian would be 'there is a woman, who carries in a Florentine manner fruits and flasks from the villa'. The expression 'a la usanza fiorentina' may describe the way the girl carries the fruits, not the tradition of doing so. That would mean Vasari was already connecting the figure with the Florentine iconographic tradition of the *Dovizia* figure. As we will see, this tradition is particularly important for the overall meaning of the Tornabuoni frescoes.

The most famous figure of *Dovizia* decorated the Mercato Vecchio in Florence from about 1430 and represented an allegory of abundance. The sculpture is now lost, but thanks to textual and visual documents we can deduce that

14 Vasari Giorgio, *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori e architettori nelle redazioni del 1550 e 1568*, ed. R. Bettarini, 6 vols. (Florence: 1966–1997) vol. 3, 488.

15 Vasari Giorgio, *Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, trans. G. Du C. De Vere, 10 vols. (New York: 1976) vol. 3, 228.

Ghirlandaio's nymph has a lot in common with Donatello's model.<sup>16</sup> Donatello's sculpture, including its meaning and iconography, is described by Ferdinando del Migliore in *Firenze città nobilissima illustrata* of 1684.<sup>17</sup>

[...] espressa la Statua in quella forma consueta figurarsi dagl'antichi l'abbondanza, con una cesta di frutta in testa e sotto 'l braccio il cornucopia.<sup>18</sup>

[...] the statue was expressed in the form customary to antique representations of abundance, with a basket of fruit on her head and a cornucopia under her arm.

Donatello's original in the Mercato Vecchio was made in *pietra serena*, which is vulnerable to changeable climatic conditions. Therefore, it already had to be replaced by a figure of the same subject by Giovanni Battista Foggini between 1720 and 1722 [Fig. 5.4].<sup>19</sup> Foggini's sculpture was very likely shaped on Donatello's model. The figure is characterised by an aerial dress and dynamic movement of the body, and is composed in a strong *contrapposto*. Under her left arm she holds a cornucopia. Foggini's sculpture, a copy of which is placed at the top of the column in the Piazza della Repubblica in Florence, built in the place of the ancient Mercato Vecchio, lacks the motif of a plate of fruits carried on the head. Nevertheless, the pictorial evidences prove that Donatello's original included this particular element. It is confirmed by an anonymous *View of the Mercato Vecchio* from the Berini Collection and Giorgio Vasari's *Preaching of St. Peter Martyr in the Mercato Vecchio* from the Vatican, where one can easily discern a statue at the top of the column with a plate of fruit on the head.<sup>20</sup> Finally, the iconographic tradition of Donatello's *Dovizia* was adopted by the Della Robbia workshop, which produced several small *Dovizia* statues [Fig. 5.5] that were for domestic use and were believed to bring good luck to and offer protection for the household. Della Robbia's figures share the iconographic pattern of Donatello's lost statue and Ghirlandaio's "nymph" from the Tornabuoni

16 Wilkins D.G., "Donatello's Lost *Dovizia* for the *Mercato Vecchio*: Wealth and Charity as Florentine Civic Virtues", *The Art Bulletin* 65, 3 (1983) 401–423.

17 Del Migliore Ferdinando Leopoldo, *Firenze città nobilissima illustrata da Ferdinando Leopoldo Del Migliore. Prima, seconda, e terza parte del primo libro* (Florence, Stamperia della Stella: 1684) 514–515.

18 Ibidem 515, my translation.

19 Wilkins, "Donatello's Lost *Dovizia*" 403.

20 Ibidem 407–408.





FIGURE 5.4  
Battista Foggini, *Dovizia*  
(1720–1722). Statue in pietra  
serena, copy. Florence, Piazza  
della Repubblica.



FIGURE 5.5  
Della Robbia Workshop,  
*Dovizia* (ca. 1500). Glazed  
terracotta. Berlin, Bode  
Museum.

Chapel, namely, the dancing, *contrapposto* pose, the ethereal drapery and a fruit basket supported on the head by the right hand. A similar iconographic scheme can also be found on a painting from Botticelli's workshop dated between 1490 and 1510 and now in the Condé Museum in Chantilly.<sup>21</sup> The modern title for the painting is *Autumn or the Allegory against the Abuse of Wine*, but its dependence on the iconographic scheme of the *Dovizia* figure remains unequivocal. The Autumn figure is pictured in an analogous pose, walking forward with force and determination. She carries on her head an enormous basket full of seasonal fruit like apples, grapes, figs and pears. At her feet there are two slightly tipsy looking putti carrying grapes and a flute – both Dionysian attributes. This painting once again links the figure of the nymph *Dovizia* with the Dionysian tradition referred to by Warburg and Didi-Huberman, yet certain details of its iconography differ from the form of Ghirlandaio's servant girl. Certainly, the multiple examples from the Florentine iconographic tradition prove how popular and important representations of *Dovizia* were in the local visual culture. In this context it is right to interpret Vasari's description of Ghirlandaio's maid, who carries the fruits *a la usanza fiorentina*, as a direct reference to this rich and long-established Florentine convention.

The fact that the *Dovizia* figure became associated with Florence results from the textual tradition that can be connected to these images. David Wilkins analysed the meaning of Donatello's *Dovizia* for the Mercato Vecchio and showed that the statue not only represented abundance and prosperity, but also functioned as a personification of Florence itself.<sup>22</sup> In fact, the myth of Florence's wealth and prosperity laid at the foundations of local historiography. In Leonardo Bruni's *Historiarum florentini populi libri XII*, which he began to write in 1415,<sup>23</sup> the richness of Florence is described as one of the seminal sources of the city's power.<sup>24</sup> According to Bruni, aspirations to achieve prosperity were already expressed by the name "Florentia". The city was once called "Fluentia", but thanks to its success and extraordinary flowering the name changed to "Florentia".

21 Didi-Huberman, *Ninfa fluida* 62, plate 29.

22 Wilkins, "Donatello's Lost *Dovizia*" 416–418.

23 Vasoli C., "Leonardo Bruni", in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* (Rome: 1972) vol. 14, 618–633, here 624.

24 Becker M., "The Florentine Territorial State and Civic Humanism in the Early Renaissance", in Rubinstein N. (ed.), *Florentine Studies. Politics and Society in Renaissance Florence* (London: 1968) 109–139, here 135; Wilcox D.J., *The Development of Florentine Humanistic Historiography in the Fifteenth Century* (Cambridge: 1969) 94.

Novam urbem, quod inter fluentia duo posita erat Fluentiam primo vocitarunt eiusque incolae Fluentini dicti. Et id quidem nomen per aliqua tempora urbi fuisse videtur, donec crescentibus rebus et civitate maiorem in modum adaucta, sive corrupto ut in plerisque vocabulo sive quod miro floreret successu, pro Fluentia Florentiam dixere.

The new city located between these two waterways was at first called Fluentia and its inhabitants Fluentini. The name lasted for some time, it seems, until the city grew and developed. Then, perhaps just through the ordinary process by which words are corrupted, or perhaps because of the wonderfully successful flowering of the city, Fluentia became Florentia.<sup>25</sup>

In the writings of Poggio Bracciolini and Matteo Palmieri the myth of the city's wealth and prosperity was linked to the concept of *magnificentia* and acquired strong civic and social connotations. The abundance, richness and extraordinary expenses of wealthy citizens were justified because of their importance for the common good of the community. Poggio's moral condemnation of avarice in *De avaritia* therefore resulted from the fact that the vice implicates a wealthy citizen's disinterest in the community. Consequently, personal economic prosperity and care for private income was justified only if followed by an activity in the public sphere, that is, if it led to the growth of the community's *magnificentia* and was accompanied by acts of charity and mercy.<sup>26</sup> We can find a similar conception of abundance and *magnificentia* in Matteo Palmieri's *Vita Civile* composed between 1430 and 1436. Palmieri dedicated the entire Book 4 of his dialogue to the question of utility, in which he discusses the relationship between wealth and the public good. In introducing the subject of the human activity aimed at increasing wealth and well-being, Palmieri

25 Bruni Leonardo, *History of the Florentine People*, ed. and trans. J. Hankins (Cambridge: 2001) vol. 1, 10–11.

26 Poggio Bracciolini, *Dialogus contra avaritiam*, ed. G. Germano (Livorno: 1994) XII, 6, 77. 'You soon would see what total confusion would result if we wanted only enough to provide for ourselves. The people would be deprived of fine virtues such as mercy and charity, for undoubtedly no one could be generous and liberal in those circumstances. After all, what can anyone give away if he has nothing in excess to give? How can anyone be munificent who has only enough for himself? Every splendour, every refinement, every ornament would be lacking. No one would build churches or colonnades; all artistic activity would cease, and confusion would result in our lives and in public affairs if everyone were satisfied with only enough for himself.' Trans. Kohl B.G. – Welles E.B. in Kohl B.G. – Witt R.G. (eds.), *The Earthly Republic. Italian Humanists on Government and Society* (Philadelphia: 1978) 260.

initially recalled the myth of the Golden Age, that fantastical period described by ancient writers as the time when people neither worked nor practiced agriculture or trade. According to Palmieri, a radical change in the life of these early communities was marked by the arrival of Saturn, who sailed from Crete to Italy and started spreading knowledge of agriculture, fruit cultivation, cooking and building. His actions led to the introduction of coin money and awoke in people the desire to possess more than others and more than they needed themselves.<sup>27</sup> That opened the door to the rise of avarice on the one hand and generous opulence on the other. The humanist also praised the generosity of wealthy citizens, directed towards the embellishment of cities and the increase of the community's magnificence, as highly useful for civic life.<sup>28</sup>

The concept of *magnificentia*, which offered a moral justification for wealth and extraordinary expenses, constituted an important political argument for the Medicean faction. It was often used to present the Medici family's predominance over the political, cultural and economic life of Florence in a positive light. In fact, the idea is represented on the walls of the Tornabuoni Chapel not only in the figure of *Dovizia*, but also in an inscription in the *Annunciation to Zacharias*. Above the arch on the right side of the fresco one finds the following:

AN[NO] MCCCCLXXX QVO PVLCHERRIMA CIVITAS  
OPIBUS VICTORIIS ARTIBUS AEDIFICIISQVE NOBILIS COPIA  
SALVBRITE PACE PERFRVEBATVR

In the year 1490, when the most beautiful city, graced by richness, victories, arts, and buildings, enjoyed wealth, health and peace.

The verses, probably composed by Poliziano,<sup>29</sup> once again recall the myth of the Golden Age and proclaim the opulence, abundance and magnificence of the city of Florence. The maid figure refers to this idea and becomes fully

27 Palmieri Matteo, *Vita civile*, ed. G. Belloni (Florence: 1982) 1V/118–127, 174–176.

28 Ibidem 1V/213, 194. 'In nel luogo sequente pongano quelle cose che in nella città sono meno necessarie, ma contengono apparato maggiore et amplitudine splendida degli ornamenti civili. Di queste, parte ne sono poste nella insigne magnificentia degli spaziosi edifici, parte in nella veneranda dignità et somma excellentia della servata maiestà de' pubblici magistrati, parte nelle reverendissime celebrità de' magnificentissimi apparati delle solennità de' culti divini, parte ancora in negli ornamenti particolari et nello splendido vivere de' privati cittadini'.

29 Simons P., *Portraiture and Patronage in Quattrocento Florence with Special Reference to the Tornaquinci and their Chapel in S. Maria Novella*, 2 vols., Ph.D. dissertation (University of Melbourne: 1985) vol 1, 237.

intelligible in the context of the writings of the Florentine historiographers who link the myth of the Golden Age with Florentine civic thought. During the age of Lorenzo the Magnificent, the narrative of opulence and generosity became a powerful political weapon used to explain and justify the undeniable influence of the Medici on the city's public image. In this context, the Tornabuoni Chapel can be interpreted as another expression of Medicean politics regarding Florentine imagery. It seems that the decoration took part in a process of guaranteeing public support for the Medicean government and that the *Dovizia* figure expressed these political notions.

As the present study has shown, Warburg's interpretation of the female figure in the *Birth of St. John the Baptist* was strongly inspired by his fascination with the ethereal forms of the girl who evokes desire and attraction. Warburg's reading managed to grasp the servant girl's meaning only in part. In fact, Gombrich's interpretation of the letters Warburg exchanged with Jolles, according to which they are not supposed to be read as academic papers at all, seems justified. The epistolary form gave the scholar the freedom to write an imaginative literary text, rather than perform a scholarly analysis, and refer to connotations suggested by the image but not expressed directly therein.<sup>30</sup> Therefore, in order to understand the meaning and place of the maid within the cycle, it is worth analysing the figure's iconography in dialogue with the philosophical texts that circulated between the patrons responsible for the chapel's decoration. In this context, the Warburgian notion of the *ninfa fiorentina* seems aimed at studying common features of female figures in general in Florentine art. Its weak point remains the comparison between figures of very different nature, character and meaning. A *Dovizia*, a Salome or a Judith can share certain sets of stylistic features, but they remain distinct and will always differ in meaning within the scenes where they appear. The present study has tried to take a critical approach to Warburg's notion of the *ninfa fiorentina* and explain the place of *Dovizia* within the decoration of the Tornabuoni Chapel in dialogue with Florentine civic thought and Medicean politics regarding Florentine visual culture. Moreover, it has demonstrated the relationship between the maid figure and the myth of the Golden Age, also recalled in the scene of the *Annunciation to Zacharias*. In this context, the dancing servant seems to represent the opulence of Florence and the mythical prosperity of the city ruled by the Medici and their allies. More than a dancing nymph, she seems to represent flourishing *Florentia* who experiences the eternal youth, happiness and abundance guaranteed by the illustrious rule of the Medici.

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30 Gombrich, *Aby Warburg* 107.

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**PART 2**

***Literary Representations***







# Lamenting, Dancing, Praising: The Multilayered Presence of Nymphs in Florentine Elegiac Poetry of the Quattrocento<sup>1</sup>

Christoph Pieper

That nymphs are conspicuously present in the Florentine culture of the Quattrocento, needs no affirmation. It suffices to recall that in Florence Sandro Botticelli painted probably the most famous Quattrocento nymph, the Flora of his *Primavera*. In my contribution, I will deal with Latin, mostly elegiac, poetry written between 1440 and 1480. I will argue that nymphs are prominent in the central context for which such poetry could be written. After briefly summarising the concept of the nymph as it appears in some exegetic texts, I will focus on three aspects of the poetic production of Florentine humanists. The first part will deal with nymphs in epitaphs for deceased members of humanist society; the second with love elegies in which, as I argue, the elegiac *puella* is associated with the world of the nymphs to stress her inspiring function for poetic production; and the third will demonstrate how in poems praising the city of Florence nymphs also have a hugely important function. At the end, I will suggest that this powerful presence of nymphs is reflected in the elegies of Alessandro Braccesi, which seem to capture important features of the poetic discourse on nymphs – a considerable influence on Botticelli when painting his *Primavera*.

## 1 Theory

A very useful source for the way Florentine humanists wrote about nymphs in the works of ancient poets are the theoretical writings of Cristoforo Landino, the most influential Latin poet in Florence before Angelo Poliziano who, after having written verses during the first half of his life, became professor of

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1 I am very grateful to Susanne Opitz for many inspiring talks on nymphs in art and literature, and for her numerous suggestions to improve this article. Laura Napran has kindly corrected my English. Also, I thank the editors Anita Traninger and Karl Enenkel for their constructive suggestions to ameliorate the argument.

Latin at the Studio Fiorentino – ‘divenuto da poeta lettore di poeti’, as Roberto Cardini has formulated with masterful brevity.<sup>2</sup> In 1482, Landino published a commentary on Horace, a poet whose text shows close affinity to the nymphs. In his first ode (this poem is traditionally the very first within an *opera omnia* edition of Horace), after having praised Maecenas, he declares that ‘the cool grove and the light-footed round dance of the nymphs, mixed with Satyrs, keep me at a distance to the ordinary business of normal people’, ‘me gelidum nemus / Nympharumque leves cum Satyris chori / secernunt populo’.<sup>3</sup> With these extraordinary verses, Horace declares that poetry for him is no vulgar business, but an elevated cultural achievement that must not be mixed with other possible lifestyles. Poetry, according to these verses, is as honourable with respect to achieving eternal glory as other, traditionally more accepted ones in Rome (like brave deeds in the army, farming, or trading). However, in order to produce their poetry, poets must not mix with the masses, but must segregate themselves in order to find a state of tranquillity and peace. This ideal poetic existence is metaphorically expressed through the image of the dance of nymphs and satyrs, a bucolic scene of untouched nature and at the same time of utmost poetic inspiration.

Horace’s ideal of the distance from the masses heavily influenced Renaissance ideas about the nature of poetry. Already Giovanni Boccaccio in the fourteenth book of his *Genealogie deorum gentilium*, in which he defends poetry from scholastic criticism (and thereby extols the life of his friend and model Petrarch), declares that poets must necessarily live far from the cities with their masses of uncultivated people.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, in his commentary on

2 Cardini R., *La critica del Landino* (Florence: 1973) 15.

3 Horace, *Odes* 1, 1, 30–32.

4 Boccaccio’s chapter XIV, 11 is entitled ‘Ob meditationis comodum solitudines incoluere poete’ (‘Poets have inhabited the solitudes because of the advantage of being able to concentrate thinking’). Already in chapter XIV, 4, he contrasts the life of poets and jurists, see Boccaccio Giovanni, *Genealogie deorum gentilium*, ed. V. Zaccaria, in *Tutte le opere di Giovanni Boccaccio*, vol. 7–8 (Milan: 1998) XIV, 4: ‘Poete in secessu carmina sua canunt, iuriste turbelis inmixti et frequentia fori apud rostra litigia clamant; illi gloriam et inclitam famam, aurum isti desiderant; illos taciturnitas atque ruris solitudo delectat, hos pretorium, tribunalia, et litigantium strepitus; illorum pax amica est, horum questiones et litigium.’ (‘Poets sing their songs in withdrawal, jurists shout out their trials at the *rostra* in between the crowds and the masses on the forum; the poets desire glory and special reputation, the jurists want gold; poets are delighted by silence and the loneliness of the countryside, jurists by the seat of the praetor, the court of law and the noise of the processing parties; peace is the friend of poets, law suits and trials are the friends of jurists’). For the portrayal of jurists in Boccaccio’s *Genealogia*, see

Horace's ode 1.1, Cristoforo Landino briefly refers to this tradition: 'with the grove and the nymphs and satyrs he shows that poets flee from the multitude of men and are pleased by solitude' ('per nemus autem et nymphas et satyros indicat poetas frequentiam hominum refugere et solitudine delectari'). And then he laconically continues: 'de satyris autem et nymphis in sequentibus dicemus' ('we will speak about satyrs and nymphs later in this commentary').<sup>5</sup> But the only systematic lemma I could find in *sequentibus* is the one to ode 1.30.6 in which Landino mentions the obvious division of nymphs into six different subtypes according to their dwelling place (the Nerinae [sea], Naiades [fountains], Oreades [mountains], Dryades [woods], Hamadryades [trees], and Napeae [flowers]), but without any further metaphorical explanation.<sup>6</sup> This is quite typical for Landino – if one looks for insightful comments to the Horatian passages to which he alludes in his own poetry (as we will see later), one finds scarcely anything resembling the refinement of his own "imitative" interpretation.<sup>7</sup>

More revealing is a lemma to the Horatian verse 'iunctaeque Nymphis Gratiae decentes' ('decent Graces mixed with nymphs', *Odes* 1.4.6). Here, Landino criticises a scholion attributed to the third-century philologist Acro (as the attribution is very doubtful, he is mostly referred to as Pseudo-Acro now).<sup>8</sup> Ps.-Acro's explanation runs as follows: 'when speaking of nymphs, he wants the reader to understand it as meaning "women", with Graces, he means "virgins"' ('per nymphas mulieres intelligi voluit, per gratias virgines'). Landino refers to Acro's explanation (which in similar terms can also be found once

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now Döring P.C., "Künstler und Rechtsgelehrte im Streit. *Genealogie deorum gentilium* XIV 4 und *Decameron* VI 5", in Enenkel K.A.E. – Leuker T. – Pieper Ch. (eds.), *Iohannes de Certaldo. Beiträge zu Boccaccios lateinischen Werken und ihrer Wirkung* (Hildesheim etc.: 2015) 3–24.

5 I quote from the 1486 edition Horace, *Opera cum commentario Christophori Landini* (Venice, Bernardinus Stagninus: 1486) fol. 7<sup>r</sup>. I used the copy Munich, Bayrische Staatsbibliothek BSB-Ink H-365, URN: urn:nbn:de:bvb:12-bsb00054110-0.

6 Ibidem fol. 38<sup>r</sup>.

7 See now for Landino's commentary on Horace Stadeler A., *Horazrezeption in der Renaissance. Strategien der Horazkommentierung bei Cristoforo Landino und Denis Lambin* (Berlin – New York: 2015).

8 For Landino criticizing the ancient commentary tradition (to which he sticks in most of the cases), see also Pieper Ch., "Horatius praeceptor eloquentiae. The *Ars poetica* in Cristoforo Landino's Commentary", in Enenkel K.A.E. – Nellen H. (eds.), *Neo-Latin Commentaries and the Management of Knowledge in the Late Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period (1400–1700)* (Leuven: 2013) 221–240, here 229–231.

in Servius' commentary on the *Aeneid* and once in Isidore's *Etymologies*),<sup>9</sup> although he does not believe that it is the most convincing one: 'but I do not see why we cannot understand the nymphs and the Graces especially within the context of poetry' ('sed non video cur ipsas etiam nymphas et gratias presertim in re poetica intelligere non possimus').<sup>10</sup>

Already some decades earlier, we find the same link in Giovanni Tortelli's *De orthographia*, a work containing definitions of all Greek loanwords in Latin. His explanation of the nymphs also mentions the translation of the word as 'sponsa' (married women). Then he continues with an etymologizing explanation derived from Servius (and perhaps also from Isidore):

sed putaverunt antiqui nymphas aquarum esse deas quasi lympharum numina. unde teste Servio in Tityrum omnibus aquis praesunt. Varro vero nymphas esse dixit quas et musas, nec inmerito cum teste eodem Servio super septimam aeglogam aquae motus musicam faciat. quare idem Varro tres tantum musas commemoravit: unam quae ex aquae nascitur motu, aliam quae ex sonu fit aeris percussi, tertiam quae mera tantum voce constitit. ex quo Vergilius musas ipse velut nymphas nonnumquam invocavit cum ait in bucolica: 'Nymphae noster amor Libetrices'.<sup>11</sup>

But the ancients believed that the nymphs were deities of the waters ('lympharum numina'). Therefore, according to Servius in his commentary on the *Tityrus* (i.e., Virgil's first eclogue), they rule over all waters.

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- 9 Servius, *Commentary to Vergil's Aeneid* VIII, 336: 'nymphae autem maritae dicit: nam graece sponsa νύμφη dicitur. haec autem non vere nympha fuit, sed vaticinatrix'; Isidore, *Etymologies* IX, 7, 8: 'nam nympha sponsa in nuptiis; et nympha pro lavationis officio, quod et ad nomen nubentis adluditur'.
- 10 Horace, *Opera* fol. 13<sup>v</sup>. With this explanation, Landino is surely closer to the Horatian verses from *Ode* I, 1 quoted earlier in which Horace defines himself as a poet remote from the ordinary masses, but not necessarily closer to the Horatian verses on which he is commenting right now (in *Ode* I, 4, the Graces and nymphs are accompanying the beginning of spring).
- 11 Tortelli Giovanni, *De orthographia dictionum e Graecis tractarum* (Venice, Nicolaus Jenson: 1471) fol. <196<sup>v</sup>>. I used Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek BSB-Ink T-384, online via ZVDD: <http://www.zvdd.de/dms/load/met/?PPN=urn%3Anbn%3Ade%3Abvb%3A12-bsb00058263-7>. The reference to Servius' commentary is Servius, *Commentary to Virgil's Eclogues* 1, 52 and 7, 21 (the final Virgilian quotation is also *Eclogues* 7, 21). The two references to Varro are also in Servius. But Tortelli surely also knew Isidore, *Etymologies* VIII, 11, 96: 'Nymphas deas aquarum, quasi numina lympharum. Ipsas autem dicunt et Musas quas et nymphas, nec inmerito'.

Varro says that the nymphs are the same as the Muses – and not without reason, as (according to the same Servius on the seventh eclogue) the movement of the water produces music. Therefore the same Varro has only spoken of three Muses: one born from the movement of water, the second arising from the sound of stricken air, and a third who consists of the pure voice alone. Hence Virgil himself sometimes invokes the Muses as nymphs when in his *Eclogues* he says: ‘Nymphs from Leibethra, our love’.

Both passages from Landino and Tortelli reveal that, apart from mostly being seen as water nymphs (the Naiads are indeed the most mentioned subtype of nymphs in poetry of the time), they are closely connected with poetic inspiration. With this explicit link between nymphs and poetry, we are indeed in the centre of the discourse on nymphs in the Florentine Quattrocento, as we will subsequently see.

## 2 Funeral Eulogies

When one turns from theory to poetic practice, the link between nymphs and inspiration is very visible in some epitaphs or commemorative eulogies of deceased famous humanists. I start with a text not written in Florence. In 1457 Antonio Beccadelli composed an epitaph for the deceased humanist Giovanni Piero d’Avenza (Iohannes Petrus Lucensis) who, in the last years of his life, had been professor of grammar, rhetoric, and poetics in Lucca. His funeral must have been a rather impressive public spectacle, as Franco Pignatti, the author of the lemma on Giovanni Piero in the *Dizionario biografico degli italiani* tells us:<sup>12</sup> his embalmed body was buried in the facade of the cathedral of Lucca, adorned with a laurel crown. Beccadelli’s epitaph picks up this idea of a divinely inspired humanist:<sup>13</sup>

12 Pignatti F., “Giovanni Pietro (Giampietro) d’Avenza (da Lucca)”, in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani* 56 (Rome: 2001) 397–400.

13 The epigram is edited in Beccadelli Antonio, *Poesie latine inedite di Antonio Beccadelli detto il Panormita*, ed. A. Cinquini – R. Valentini (Aosta: 1907). I could not access a copy of this rare edition, but quote the text instead from the online resource *Poeti d’Italia in lingua latina*, <http://www.poetiditalia.it/public/> (last visited July 20, 2016).

Qui decus Italiae fueram lumenque Latinis,  
 ecce brevis nostra iam premit ossa lapis.  
 Ingenium Pallas dederat, Cyllenius artem,  
 eloquium Musae, pulcher Apollo lyram.  
 Flevistis Nymphae, flevistis fata sorores  
 iam Petri nostri; sic requiescat humi.

I was the adornment of Italy and the light for those who write Latin, and now – behold! – a small stone presses my ashes. Pallas Athena had given the talent, Mercury the technical skills, the Muses the eloquence, beautiful Apollo the lyre. Ye nymphs, sisters, you mourned the end of our Piero; may he thus rest in the earth.

After having listed the inspiring deities that had shown interest in Giovanni Piero when he was still alive (Pallas Athena, Mercury, the Muses, and Apollo), the poet addresses the nymphs shedding tears at the tomb. In the first instance, one might relate the final distich to a famous classical model: in Virgil's fifth eclogue the nymphs weep because of the death of Daphnis ('extinctum Nymphae crudeli funere Daphnim / flebant', *Eclogues* 5, 20–21.) who in the same eclogue is addressed some verses later as divine poet ('divine poeta', 5, 45). Servius, in his commentary, relates the act of weeping to the Nymphs' natural feeling of piety ('fleverunt Nymphae quibus insita est naturaliter pietas').

The main reason, however, why I quote this little epigram by Beccadelli is that it nicely illustrates Tortelli's remark 'nymphas esse [...] quas et musas'. The text itself does not say so explicitly, although verses 3–6 suggest an implicit causal connection between the deceased having been an inspired writer (v. 3–4) and the sorrow of the nymphs (v. 5–6). That Beccadelli's nymphs in verse 5 are indeed *replacing* the Muses of verse 4 might be corroborated by the epitaph which Carlo Marsuppini had written for the deceased Leonardo Bruni thirteen years earlier in Florence (commemorating a humanist whose funeral had been celebrated with similar public pomp, the reports of which were surely known to Beccadelli). Bruni's tomb was a milestone in the development of classicistic humanist grave monuments in Italy.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, it is very

14 Cf. Natali A., "Il pianto delle Muse. I sepolcri di Leonardo Bruni e Carlo Marsuppini monumenti dell'umanesimo", in Berti L. (ed.), *Il Pantheon di Santa Croce a Firenze* (Florence: 1993) 17–55, who mentions only very few earlier examples of similar formal characteristics, one of those being the tomb of antipope John XXIII in the Battistero of Florence by Donatello and Michelozzo.

probable that Beccadelli reacted to this by similarly alluding to the epitaph on Bruni's tomb which reads as follows:<sup>15</sup>

Postquam Leonardus e vita migravit,  
 Historia luget, Eloquentia muta est,  
 ferturque Musas tum Graecas tum  
 Latinas lacrimas tenere non potuisse.

After Leonardo died, History is sad, Eloquence is mute, and one says that the Greek and Latin Muses could not restrain their tears.

Marsuppini's epitaph could (and can still) be read engraved on Bruni's tomb which was built by Bernardo Rosselini for the church of Santa Croce in Florence, and it definitively served as a model for later poets, especially in Tuscany.

Recently, Allison Levy has offered a reading of Marsuppini's verses within the culture of masculinity in Renaissance Florence. According to her, the epitaph almost undermines the suppression of grief and tears to which Bruni and other leading Florentine humanists in funeral orations had exhorted the mourners.<sup>16</sup> She builds on research by Sharon Strocchia who has demonstrated that women were usually not allowed at public funerals in fifteenth-century Florence.<sup>17</sup> Given this evidence, it might at first sight be surprising that the epitaphs stage female figures as the most important mourners of the deceased. At a second glance, however, Levy's observation seems somewhat overstated, as it underestimates the importance of three elements with respect to the inscription. First, the generic rules of funeral orations are very different from funerary poetry. Weeping divine female figures are, in fact, part of the poetic imagery of the fifteenth century, but they are much less expected in orations. Second, Marsuppini's text inscribes itself into the ancient tradition of grave epitaphs.

15 The text is now edited in Marsuppini Carlo, *Carmi latini*, ed. and trans. I. Pierini (Florence: 2014) 645.

16 Levy A., *Re-Membering Masculinity in Early Modern Florence. Widowed Bodies, Mourning and Portaiture* (Aldershot – Burlington, VT: 2006) 41–44, here 43: 'Ironically, on the funerary monument of one of the strongest advocates for a re-orchestration of public mourning, tears are unrestrained'. See for a link between Marsuppini's verses and the funeral oration for Bruni composed by Giannozzo Manetti Natali, "Il pianto delle Muse" 21 (both texts celebrate Bruni for three outstanding merits: 'il suo essere storico, il suo essere oratore, il suo essere poeta').

17 Strocchia S.T., "Death Rites and Ritual Family in Renaissance Florence", in Tetel M. – Witt R.G. – Goffen R. (eds.), *Life and Death in Fifteenth-Century Florence* (Durham – London: 1989) 120–145, here 125–127.



In this case, the verses are authorised by being intertextually linked to two of the most ancient surviving examples of antiquity, the funerary inscriptions on Naevius' and Plautus' tomb respectively, as reported by Aulus Gellius in *Noctes Atticae* 1, 24, 2–3.<sup>18</sup> By relating the epitaph for Bruni to that of two early Roman poets, Marsuppini stresses what Bruni himself in his writings had claimed so often: Florentine humanist culture is the heir of Rome's literary heritage, while Bruni is maintained to be one of the founding fathers of this Florentine cultural flourishing.

Within this rhetorical strategy, the crying Muses are part of the (intertextual) game. In Naevius' epitaph, the possibility of gods weeping for the death of mortals is expressed in verses 1–2 in a hypothetical formulation ('*Immortales mortales si foret fas flere / flerent divae Camenae Naevium poetam*', 'if it was acceptable for gods to cry for mortals, the divine Muses would weep for Naevius, the poet'). Marsuppini's verses transform this *irrealis* mood into a *realis*, as if he wanted to disagree with the premise underlying Naevius' auto-epitaph, namely that divine law and custom forbid the Muses to be so heavily afflicted by human affairs. Instead, he proposes that Muses can and will indeed weep for a learned writer whom they have fostered when he was alive. That Marsuppini's contemporaries did see the importance of this claim, as well as its anchoring in ancient routes, finds proof when he himself died nine years after Leonardo Bruni. Marsuppini was honoured with a public funeral as well. The funerary oration was delivered by Matteo Palmieri in Santa Croce (that means, within the range of vision of Bruni's tomb), and Palmieri explicitly links the two deceased via a reference to the ancient pretexts of Bruni's epitaph. After a triple invocation of the defunct (celebrating him as '*sapientiae lumen*', '*Latinae et Graecae linguae et elegantiae princeps*', and '*vir doctissimus*'), Palmieri begins the actual speech by quoting verbatim the first two lines of Naevius' epitaph, only exchanging the two names ('*Carolum*' instead of '*Naevium*').<sup>19</sup> Palmieri thus corroborates the importance of Marsuppini's epitaph for Bruni, and thereby the presence of the weeping Muses at the funerals of leading humanists. Whereas the oration reacts to the pretexts of Marsuppini's epitaph for Bruni, the epitaph on Marsuppini's tomb by Francesco Griffolini (directly opposite

18 Cf. Courtney E. (ed.), *The Fragmentary Latin Poems* (Oxford: 1993) 47–50 (s.v. '*Epitaphs of Poets*'). For a sound treatment of the allusions to Plautus and Naevius in Marsuppini's epitaph, see Schmidt V., 'A Humanist's Life Summarized. Leonardo Bruni's Epitaph', *Humanistica Lovaniensia* 47 (1998) 1–14.

19 The text of the *oratio* can be found in Salvini Salvino, *Fasti consolari dell'Accademia fiorentina* (Florence: 1717) 525–527.

Bruni's monument) can be seen as an answer to the content of the verses.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, when the Florentine rulers ordered Desiderio da Settignano to design Marsuppini's tomb, he copied many of the visual elements from that of Bruni. Hence it is no surprise that the verse inscription also repeats the idea of Latin and Greek Muses crying together (v. 5–6): 'Ausoniae et Graiae crines nunc solvite Musae: / occidit heu vestri fama decusque chori.' ('Italian and Greek Muses, unbind your hair now: the glory and ornament of your dance is dead.')<sup>21</sup>

As we have seen so far, the fact that nymphs and Muses are closely related, if not equal, is easily understandable in the case of a fellow humanist. But the tradition expands: we also find weeping nymphs in eulogies of important persons from public life, especially learned patrons of the arts. To give just one very powerful example (for which I leave the Florentine context again, although I suspect that the author knew the epitaphs on the tombs in Santa Croce):<sup>22</sup> in 1472 Martino Filetico wrote a poem of 356 verses on the death of Battista Sforza, the second wife of Federico da Montefeltro.<sup>23</sup> At a certain moment, when describing her death, he expands on the sorrow of the gods who are listed in an enumeration of many verses. The beginning of the catalogue is a potent example of lamenting nymphs who are (this time explicitly) connected to the Muses:

Ante omnes divae plorarunt funera Musae:  
intumuit Pallas, indoluitque Venus;  
Naiades hanc omnes et agrestia numina nymphae,  
luxerunt Dryades, Nereidumque chorus.<sup>24</sup>

20 I am grateful to Prof. Donatella Coppini (Florence) for helping me with the name of the author of the epitaph. Griffolini's authorship is mentioned in Benedetti S., "Griffolini, Francesco", in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani* 59 (2002) 382–385, here 384. Pierini, *Carlo Marsuppini* 642–643, n. 508 remarks that the attribution is widely accepted 'pur con qualche incertezza'.

21 Natali, "Il pianto delle Muse" 55 has remarked that these verses echo Marsuppini's weeping Muses in his epitaph for Bruni.

22 The expression 'divae [...] Musae' echoes the 'divae Camenae' of Naevius' epitaph, and thus also refers to the aforementioned Florentine tradition (as far as I can see, 'diva Musa' is not attested in classical Latin and appears for the first time in Arnobius, *Adversus nationes* III, 38).

23 The text is edited in Filetico Martino, *Elegie latine di Martino Filetico, umanista del Lazio*, ed. A. Cinquini (Aosta: 1906). Filetico had been Battista's teacher for some years, cf. Bianca C., "Filetico (Filettico), Martino", in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani* 47 (1996) 636–640, here 637.

24 Filetico, *Elegie* 269–272.

First of all, the divine Muses lamented her funeral, Pallas became swollen from grief, Venus was sad. All Naiads and the nymphs, divinities of the fields, the Dryads, and the choir of Nereids wept for her.

As mentioned above, Filetico's text inscribes itself into the cultural surrounding of the court of Federico da Montefeltro, a place where classical culture was received and transformed into propaganda for the ruler in a rather spectacular form. One part of the representation aimed at showing Battista as an ideal duchess and wife.<sup>25</sup> The best-known object is the famous double portrait by Piero della Francesca (today in the Galleria degli Uffizi in Florence) depicting the rulers of Urbino on one side and their triumph of virtue, piety, and love on the other. The epitaph by Filetico transforms this public image into a memorial after Battista's death.<sup>26</sup> The deep sorrow of all divinities assimilates the deceased with divine spheres, a technique that might recall similar features in the poetry written at the court of Rimini some twenty years earlier, celebrating Isotta degli Atti, the beloved and future wife of Sigismondo Malatesta. Especially, one could think of the little elegiac cycle *De amore Iovis in Isottam* by Giannantonio Porcelio in which the whole classical Olympus is depicted as battling due to Jove's love for Isotta.<sup>27</sup> As has been shown more often, the propaganda at the court of Urbino reacts to that of Sigismondo Malatesta, as the Montefeltro was eager to outdo his most influential opponent and to claim his

25 On Battista see, e.g., the biography by Mazzanti Bonvini M., *Battista Sforza Montefeltro. Una 'principessa' nel Rinascimento italiano* (Urbino: 1993).

26 The huge poem with its divine apparatus fits well the rather spectacular commemoration of Battista's death. Poems dealing with the event were collected in one manuscript, the actual Vat. Urb. Lat. 1193 in the Vatican Library, and Piero della Francesca's Brera Altarpiece (today in the Pinacoteca di Brera in Milan) has also been interpreted as a commemorative painting for both the birth of the expected male heir Guidubaldo and Battista's death, cf. Webb J.D., *The Making of the Montefeltro. Patronage of the Arts and Architecture during the Reign of Federico da Montefeltro and Battista Sforza*, Ph.D. dissertation (Bryn Mawr College: 2006) 287–289 and Roeck B. – Tönnemann A., *Die Nase Italiens. Federico da Montefeltro. Herzog von Urbino* (Berlin: 2007) 187–189. Federico is depicted kneeling in front of the Virgin Mary with a baby. The Virgin might represent Battista – in this case, Federico would venerate the deceased as an *angelica figura*, and Battista would be closely related to the divine sphere, very similar indeed to Filetico's poem.

27 Cf. Pieper Ch., "Die vielen Facetten des Sigismondo Malatesta in der ideologischen Poesie des Hofes in Rimini", in Enenkel K.A.E. – Laureys M. – Pieper Ch. (eds.), *Discourses of Power. Ideology and Politics in Neo-Latin Literature* (Hildesheim etc.: 2012) 19–41, here 24–28, for a short summary of the major propagandistic features of the work.

primacy both as local ruler and as pan-Italian condottiere.<sup>28</sup> Filetico's abundant eulogy fits this picture. His Battista is not only praised as the ideal learned woman and wife, but as a semi-divine being whose death compels both gods and nymphs to shed tears.

### 3 Love Elegies

#### 3.1 *Landino's Xandra*

From the idealised image of Battista Sforza, the transition to dealing with elegiac love poetry is not difficult. In Florence, Cristoforo Landino was one of the founding fathers of the Neo-Latin elegy. His *Xandra* is a collection of three books dealing with the speaker's love for the elegiac *puella* Xandra, with Florentine culture and politics, and with the question of divine inspiration of poets. One of the most famous poems of the first book (*Xandra* I, 25) is a composition in Sapphic stanzas about Xandra's visit to Fiesole.<sup>29</sup> Here is the beginning:

Nunc virent silvae, nemus omne frondet,  
ridet et tellus variisque frontem  
floribus pingit, fugiuntque nubes  
montibus altis.

Naiades laetas agitant choreas  
Gratiis passim Satyrisque mixtae  
et comas flavas religant corona  
versicolore.

28 Cf. Pernis M.G. – Adams L.S., *Federico da Montefeltro and Sigismondo Malatesta. The Eagle and the Elephant* (Frankfurt am Main etc.: 2003) and (summarizing) Roeck – Tönnemann, *Die Nase Italiens* 106–117.

29 On this poem, see the interpretations by Blänsdorf J., "Landino – Campano – Poliziano – Pascoli. Neue Dichtung in antikem Gewande", *Gymnasium* 91 (1984) 61–84; Rombach U., "L'idea della natura nella poesia di Cristoforo Landino", in Rotondi Secchi Tarugi L. (ed.), *L'uomo e la natura nel Rinascimento* (Milan: 1996) 113–124; Pieper Ch., *Elegos redolere Vergiliosque sapere. Cristoforo Landinos Xandra zwischen Liebe und Gesellschaft* (Hildesheim etc.: 2008) 184–192; Landino Cristoforo, *Die Xandra-Gedichte des Cristoforo Landino*, ed. A. Wenzel (Heidelberg: 2010) 54–58 and the line-by-line commentary 254–259; Comiati G., "Sonoros cantat amores. Un'analisi dei *Carmina* in metro saffico di Cristoforo Landino", *Humanistica Lovaniensia* 65 (2015) 43–73.

Concidunt venti, levis afflat aura,  
 parcit atque haedis lupus et capellis,  
 nostra dum celsas Faesulas frequentat  
 candida Xandra.

Now the woods are green, the whole grove has leaves, earth is laughing and paints her face with all kinds of flowers; the clouds flee away from the high mountains. The Naiads lead happy round dances, mixed with the Graces and the Satyrs, and they garland their blond hair with a multi-coloured crown. The winds subside, a cool breeze blows, and the wolf spares the young goats and sheep, while our fair Xandra visits the heights of Fiesole.

The lively description of spring is very reminiscent of Horace's *Ode* 1, 4 and of Virgil's bucolic landscapes, as has been shown previously.<sup>30</sup> The Naiads and Graces dancing with the Satyrs can be understood as part of such an archaising, bucolic surrounding.<sup>31</sup> In the third stanza of the poem, the reason for the explosion of happiness is given: Xandra has come to Fiesole, and her adventure makes nature rejoice. In the sixth stanza, however, her return to the city will lead to the end of the perfect season. This means that spring is not an unconditional setting of an amorous poem as would be typical for a medieval *Natureingang* (i.e., a love poem starting with a description of spring before turning to the topic of love which is inspired by the awakening of nature).<sup>32</sup> Instead, it is dependent on the presence of Xandra as its inspiring – maiden? deity? Perhaps it would not be too far-fetched to say 'nymph' in this case. The dance of nymphs that Landino mentions and that represents spring in all its magnificence seems to be centred around Xandra whose name is virtually the middle of the poem (the end of verse 12 out of 24, i.e. the last word of the third stanza). Xandra therefore could be seen as one of these nymphs, even the most important one if we accept that the nymphs dance because of the awakening

30 See Rombach, "L'idea della natura" 115–116; Pieper, *Elegos redolere* 185–186; Landino, *Die Xandra-Gedichte* 254–256 *ad loc.*

31 See on this aspect Comiati, "Sonoros cantat amores" 60.

32 See for this topic Wulffen B. von, *Der Natureingang in Minnesang und frühem Volkslied*, Ph.D. dissertation (Munich: 1961). On its reception in Quattrocento elegy, see Pieper Ch., "Medievalisms in Latin Love Poetry of the Early Italian Quattrocento", in Montoya A.C. – van Romburgh S. – van Anrooij W. (eds.), *Early Modern Medievalisms. The Interplay between Scholarly Reflection and Artistic Production* (Leiden – Boston: 2010) 45–65, here 57–61 (*inter alia* about Landino, *Xandra* 1, 3 in which a reflex of this literary phenomenon can be found).

of nature caused by Xandra's arrival. There are, moreover, other arguments for interpreting Xandra as associated with the nymphs – they stem from metapoetics, intra- and intertextuality.

The first takes up the definitions we have seen previously, namely that nymphs and poetry are closely linked. It is an obvious step to interpret the poem by Landino as one that reflects Xandra's quasi-divine status – which fits traditional elegiac concepts of the beloved *puella*.<sup>33</sup> In antiquity, as has been convincingly argued, the elegiac *puella* is also the inspiring force that enables the poet to write his verses. Propertius put it like this in his elegy II, 1, 4: 'ingenium nobis ipsa puella facit', and Ovid would take up the idea in the prooemium to the first book of his *Ars amatoria*.<sup>34</sup> Above, I have quoted Landino's commentary on the passage of Horace's *Ode* I, 4 (one of the most obvious pretexts of Landino's poem) in which nymphs and Graces take part in Venus' round dance. Landino had explained the two groups of divine creatures as part of a discourse on poetry. Landino's poem testifies to the fact that almost forty years before his commentary, he had understood the Horatian passage in a similar way. The power Xandra has over nature, her capacity to awaken spring, clearly mirrors her Muse-like inspiration for the poet. Thus, she fits perfectly into a landscape which is inhabited by nymphs.

A second argument comes from an intratextual link to the previous poem. The long elegy I, 24 is about Landino's family and about his inherited poetic

33 This starts with the first verses of Propertius' elegy I, 1 in which Amor and Cynthia in a joint attack capture the elegiac speaker; Cynthia is presented as Amor's medium, just as Laura will be in Petrarch's *Canzoniere* 3.

34 Cf. Propertius, *Elegie Libro II*, ed. and comm. P. Fedeli (Cambridge: 2005) 45–46, who underlines the surprising innovation of Propertius' verses compared to traditional reflections on poetic inspiration ('La domanda sulla fonte della creatività trova una singolare risposta'), as well as mentioning the parallel with Ovid. In Propertius, *Elegies* II, 30, 37–38 Cynthia is even presented as leading the chorus of the Muses, cf. Fedeli *ad loc.* (867): '[...] proprio per il ruolo che ora occupa fra le Muse Cinzia appare come l'unica sua fonte d'ispirazione' (my emphasis). However, the text Fedeli comments upon is a (largely accepted) emendation of the unanimously transmitted 'me' in verse 37 into 'te': 'hic ubi te prima statuent in parte choreae, / et medius docta cuspide Bacchus erit' (my emphasis) ('as soon as they will put you [Cynthia] as the leader of their round dance and Bacchus will be in the middle with his learned thyrsus'). The emendation is old and occurred somewhere before 1600 according to Hayworth S.J., *Cynthia. A Companion to the Text of Propertius* (Oxford: 2007) 245. Fedeli in his commentary, p. 867, attributes it to François Guyet (1575–1655) – I have not been able to verify this. Nevertheless, it is probable that Landino still read the text without the emendation and thus found in these verses not Cynthia as part of the Muses' choir, but the promotion of the elegiac speaker into a leader of the choir of the Muses, a *musagetes*.

inspiration.<sup>35</sup> The major part of this “autobiographical” elegy is dedicated to Francesco de’ Landini, a composer of the fourteenth century whom Cristoforo Landino presents as one of his ancestors and as his artistic predecessor. Francesco is fostered by the Muses, but also has a powerful enemy: Phthone, the personified Envy. Landino makes Greek *phthonos*, ‘envy’, female, probably due to the Latin equivalent *invidia*, but – as I would argue here – also to be able to describe Phthone as a *nymph*. For this ugly and malicious entity is characterised as ‘Phthone, the least amongst the Stygian nymphs’ (‘inter Stygias Phthone deterrima nymphas’, *Xandra* 1, 24, 45) whose main aim is to prohibit Francesco de’ Landini from becoming a good artist (in this respect, we could call her an anti-Muse). Her presence in the poem preceding the description of spring in 1, 25 invites the reader to read the two appearing nymphs, Phthone and Xandra, as antithetic: Xandra is not a Stygian, but a celestial nymph; not envy, but inspiration is her main characteristics, and she is not *deterrima*, but *prima*.

The third argument is an intertextual one and is a bit less straightforward, though in my view, it is ultimately the strongest. It is based on the setting of the poem: Fiesole. Florentine humanists loved to imagine a relocation of the divine beings of Greek and Roman antiquity in the Quattrocento: Muses, nymphs, even gods like Diana and Pan were said to have left their native Helicon and moved to the hills of Fiesole, a city of ancient Etruscan age – the remote antiquity of which, as Armando Balduino has stressed, the early modern public was accustomed to narrate.<sup>36</sup> In Giovanni Boccaccio’s *Ninfale Fiesolano* we find a description of Diana, the queen of Fiesole (cf. ott. 7), arriving there. The stanza in *ottave rime* is very reminiscent of Landino’s poem:

Diana a Fiesol in quel tempo venne,  
com’usata era sovente di fare;  
grande allegrezza pe’ monti si tenne,  
sentendo di Diana il ritornare,  
e ciascheduna ninfa festa fenne:  
e cominciârsi tutte a ragunare,  
com’usate eran, con lei molto spesso  
tutte le ninfe, da lunge e da presso.<sup>37</sup>

35 See Pieper, *Elegos redolere* 166–184 for a more detailed analysis of this poem.

36 Balduino A., “Introduzione”, in *Tutte le opere di Giovanni Boccaccio*, vol. 3: *Ninfale Fiesolano*, ed. A. Balduino (Milan: 1974) 275–489, here 277: ‘lo stesso pubblico per cui [...] favoleggiare di Fiesole antica era stata atavica e domestica consuetudine’.

37 Boccaccio, *Ninfale Fiesolano*, ed. A. Balduino, ott. 401. Translation: ‘Diana came to Fiesole in these days as she was accustomed to do. A great joy was seen on the mountains when

At first sight, the intertextual link suggests an equation of Boccaccio's Diana and Landino's Xandra. Such an interpretation is further corroborated by the meter of *Xandra* 1, 25. Landino's poem is one of only three components in Sapphic stanza in the whole *Xandra*. The first of these, entitled *Laudes Dianae*, is a prayer to Diana Lucina to assist the pregnant Xandra (*Xandra* 1, 22). This conspicuous meter in an elegiac collection, coupled with the relative closeness of the poems within the collections (they are separated merely by two others in elegiac distichs), obviously unites them and invites the reader to think about their connection. One link is the presence of Diana in both poems – literally in 1, 22 and intertextually in 1, 25. Taken together, this could reinforce the association of Xandra with Diana, both being praised by the poets for their supernatural capacities.<sup>38</sup>

But is Xandra really equated to the Roman goddess? Whereas poem 1, 25 in connection with 1, 22 and with Boccaccio's pretext could invite such interpretation, the third poem in Sapphic stanza, *Xandra* 1, 27, is about Xandra's return to Florence from her native land, i.e. Fiesole.<sup>39</sup> Again, one might think of Boccaccio's *Ninfale* to understand the deeper meaning of the expression 'rus maternum', 'native soil'. In *ottava* 8–10, Boccaccio recounts that in ancient times many maidens were offered to Diana to serve in her corona. They form a 'bella brigata / delle vergine' (*ott.* 9, 5–6) to live in Fiesole and await the visits of the goddess there. The name of these maiden-followers is 'nymphs' (*ott.* 9, 7–8): 'tutte eran ninfe a quel tempo chiamate / e sempre gian di dardi e d'archi armate' ('all were called nymphs in these days and were armed with arrows and bows'). I therefore propose that Landino has associated Xandra with Diana not in order to equate the two, but to invite the reader to think of her within a landscape defined by the presence of Diana. By calling her a daughter of Fiesole, he indicates that one rather should see Xandra as one of the *ninfe fiesolane*.

As a consequence, Xandra is no divinity, but is situated at the edge between the mortal and the divine world, a transitional figure. One can see traces of these characteristics already in Propertius' Cynthia who is depicted as the new

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one heard of Diana's return; every nymph feasted, and all the nymphs from far and from near began to join together with the goddess, as they were accustomed to do.'

38 Comiati, "Sonoros cantat amores" does not mention this metapoetic link, although his article deals with the three poems in Sapphic stanzas in the *Xandra*.

39 Landino, *Xandra* 1, 27, 9–12: 'Cernimus certe: redit ecce nobis / rure materno, mea magna cura, / Xandra. Nunc omnis timor atque tristis / luctus abito' ('I have seen it well: behold, Xandra, my dear sweetheart, comes back from her native soil. Now farewell, every fear and sad sorrow!').



Muse in his elegy 11, 1 (see above).<sup>40</sup> A more powerful tradition, however, is offered by earlier poetry in the Italian language. Especially in Dante and Petrarch, the beloved women had been depicted as participating in the divine realms – Beatrice accompanying Dante through the *paradiso* up to the Virgin Mary, and Laura being substituted with the Virgin Mary in the last canzone, *Vergine bella*, of the *Canzoniere*. Xandra stands in this tradition, too. That Landino could approach such a semi-divine elegiac *puella* (no goddess, but a mortal woman associated with the realms of the divine) to the realm of nymphs, might also be due to a Boccaccian pretext. In the *Ninfale*, he describes the nymphs not as genuinely divine, but as mortal women who have been given into Diana's service by their parents and who thereby enter a semi-divine sphere through their contact with the world of the goddess.<sup>41</sup>

### 3.2 *Bucolic Flavour*

That nymphs are a substantial part of the pastoral world needs no mentioning. They inhabit fields and groves in a world opposed to the city.<sup>42</sup> Fiesole in

40 Cf. Badet M., "De l'élégie à la nymphomanie. L'image de la femme fatale à partir de *L'enlèvement d'Hylas*", in Poignault R. (ed.), *Présence de Catulle et des élégiaques latins. Actes du colloque tenu à Tours (28–30 novembre 2002) à Raymond Chevallier in memoriam* (Clermont-Ferrand: 2005) 411–429, here 414, who comments on the Hylas elegy by Propertius (1, 20): 'D'une certaine façon, Vénus, Cynthia et les nymphes symbolisent la magnificence inaltérable du corps féminin' and interprets the link between the sexual licence of nymphs and Cynthia as a hint for the reader that Cynthia is a courtesan. This does not apply to the *puellae* of Quattrocento elegiac corpora who are all represented as members of higher social groups.

41 Cf. Boccaccio, *Ninfale Fiesolano* ott. 8, 1–3: 'Ed ancor molte glien'erano offerte / dalli lor padri e madri, che promessa / l'avean a lei per boti.' ('And many still were given to her [i.e., Diana] by their fathers and mothers who had promised them to her by vows.') See also the ancient definitions of nymphs as '(married) women', quoted under subheading 1 in this article.

42 In Angelo Poliziano's *Silva cui titulus Rusticus*, a versified *prolusione* for a course on Virgil's *Georgics*, we read a huge praise of the excellence of the life of shepherds, and among their wealth he explicitly counts 'nymphs, fauns, and satyrs with feet like goats' ('et nymphae, et fauni, et capripedes satyrisci', v. 322). In a way, Poliziano with this long description incorporates the poetic world of bucolic poetry into that of Virgil's *Georgics*, surely in order to stress the unity of Virgil's oeuvre – the passage starts in an overtly bucolic tone in v. 283 with the exclamation 'o dulces pastoris opes! o quanta beatum / quam tenet hunc tranquilla quies!' ('Oh sweet abundance of shepherds! Oh what a peaceful quietness surrounds the blessed one!'). Virgil has undoubtedly idealised the landscape of the *Georgics*, especially in the famous *laus Italiae* in *Georg.* 11, 136–176, but this passage is much more concrete in describing the ideal tempered climate and soil of the Italian peninsula and no

Landino's poem I, 25 is also characterised as a space of bucolic relaxation. The first verse of Landino's poem alludes to two verses of Virgil's eclogues (3, 57 and 7, 59),<sup>43</sup> as well as the primary idea that the arrival of a certain person in a landscape awakens nature and that nature dies again with the departure of that person, is reminiscent of Virgil's seventh eclogue in which two shepherds are engaged in a singing contest. Whereas Corydon talks about dying rivers when beautiful Alexis leaves the rural surroundings, Thyrsis praises his beloved Phyllis for almost the same marvels as the ones Xandra can cause: she makes nature blossom. In another poem of the *Xandra*, not by chance the twenty-fifth of book 2, Landino re-evokes such a bucolic setting and the nymphs that are part of it. However, things have changed. Xandra is no more part of the bucolic landscape, no longer part of the world of the nymphs. Instead, she has left for Rome (Rome as compared to Florence will play a major role in the third book of the *Xandra* where Florence is fashioned as the true heir of ancient Rome, a kind of *Roma rediviva*). The speaker's reaction is sadness as well as anger, and at the end he decides to tease her: he declares that he will leave the city, too, in order to go back into the bucolic world of an unnamed mountain – perhaps Mount Falterone, the source of the Arno:<sup>44</sup>

His ego verticibus misero deceptus amore  
 tentabo flammis pellere corde malas.  
 Namque ibi Naiades grata testudine nymphas  
 mulcebo et Satyros; rustica sacra canam.  
 Et Dryades nobis aderunt, laetissima turba,  
 quae montes et quae florea prata colunt.<sup>45</sup>

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purely poetic realm. Modern commentators therefore do not tend to link the *laus Italiae* to the world of the *Eclogues*, but to early Augustan ideals of the new *aurea aetas*, cf. Virgil, *Georgica*, ed. and comm. W. Richter (Munich: 1957) 206 and, *Georgics*, ed. and comm. R.A.B. Mynors (Oxford: 1990) 121 on verse II, 149 ('hic ver adsidium atque alienis mensibus aestas', 'here spring is everlasting and the warmth of summer lasts more months than is common').

43 See Landino, *Die Xandra-Gedichte* 254, and Pieper, *Elegos redolere* 187–188.

44 Cf. Landino Cristoforo, *Poems*, ed. M. Chatfield (Cambridge, MA – London: 2008) 348 *ad loc.* Alternatively, one could think of Fiesole or the Mugello, a mountainous region in the North of Florence which has often been connected to the divine inhabitants by Florentine poets: cf., e.g., Verino Ugolino, *Flametta*, ed. L. Mencaraglia (Florence: 1940) I, 20 (in which the Muses declare that they have moved to the Mugello), or Naldo Naldi, *Eclogae* 9 (in which Pan lives there), cf. for a short assessment of the text see Grant W.L., "The Major Poems of Naldo Naldi", *Manuscripta* 6 (1962) 131–154, here 150–151.

45 Landino, *Xandra* II, 25, 51–56.

In these mountains I will try to banish the bad flames, deceived by love as I am! For I will charm the Naiad-nymphs with their pleasing lyres and the Satyrs; I will sing of rustic, but holy things. And the Dryads will be present at my song, a very happy crowd who live on the hills and in meadows full of flowers.

Obviously, the connotation of nymphs has changed in the poem. They are no longer the inspiring deities, but the public of Landino's singing, replacing Xandra who had previously been the addressee and intended internal public of the elegies. The charms of the inhabitants of the rural surroundings are clearly meant to awaken Xandra's jealousy – Landino was well familiar with the erotic connotations nymphs often had in ancient literature, as testified by the many stories of rape of nymphs by deities or Satyrs.<sup>46</sup> But not only the erotic sub-text can make Xandra jealous – the fact that the speaker of the poem tells her that he no longer needs her in order to write holy poetry, is not exactly flattery for an elegiac girl. The nymphs, who in the first book of the *Xandra* accompanied the beloved *puella*, have separated from her and offer an alternative thematic field, i.e., the happiness of rural life, one of the remedies against an unhappy love suggested in Ovid's *Remedia amoris*.<sup>47</sup> Even if Landino's speaker ultimately chooses a different thematic re-orientation (he will not write about life in the countryside, but instead will return to the city of Florence and sing of her humanistic ideology), the visit to the nymphs, a small detour, should again be understood metapoetically. As we have seen above, inspired poetry according to Horace and Boccaccio needs the remoteness of rural solitude to exist. When the speaker in book 2 visits the landscape outside the city, the nymphs welcome him, thus sealing his status as poet worthy of inspiration, a poet of an excellence similar to Horace or Petrarch,<sup>48</sup> not only when he sings of amorous themes.

46 See Larson J., *Greek Nymphs. Myth, Cult, Lore* (Oxford: 2001) 4 on the erotically challenging nature of nymphs: 'The nymph is a highly ambiguous figure. Though sexually desirable, she is usually free of the familial restrictions applied to mortal women and can rarely be fully domesticated.' Cf. also Kramer A., "Nymphen" in *Der Neue Pauly*, Suppl. 5 (*Mythenrezeption*) 474–484, here 478 ('In der bukolischen Literatur der Neuzeit fungieren die N[ymphen] als Projektionsfiguren für die Reflexion über die weibliche Sexualität und das Begehren ihrer männlichen Betrachter').

47 Cf. Ovid, *Remedia amoris* 169–248, esp. v. 241–242: 'cum semel exieris, centum solatia curae / et rus et comites et via longa dabit' ('once you have left, the countryside, the fellow travelers and the long route will give a hundred consolations of your care').

48 Petrarch is Boccaccio's model when in the *Genealogia deorum gentilium* he asserts that poets have to live in solitude (see above). In Landino's *Xandra* 111, 10, Petrarch is praised as the Tuscan Horace, cf. Pieper, *Elegos redolere* 300, n. 309.

### 3.3 *Flora/Florentia*

Shortly after the second version of Landino's *Xandra* had been dedicated to Piero de' Medici in 1458 (the first version of 1444 had much less impact), it became an important model for a group of younger Florentine poets.<sup>49</sup> They imitated not only structural elements of Landino's collection, but also showed interest in motifs he had used. Thus, Ugolino Verino in his *Flametta* 1, 20 describes how the poetic speaker is sleeping in a grove in Fiesole when Apollo appears and tells him that he and the Muses now inhabit the mountains around Florence, clearly alluding to *Xandra* 1, 25.<sup>50</sup> More obvious still is the imitation of *Xandra*'s visit to Fiesole in Alessandro Braccesi's *Amores* 7 which has the telling title 'Contemnit urbium cultores' ('He hates people who frequent the cities'). The poem starts with a long passage in which the speaker enumerates the luxury that others accumulate in the city, and firmly declares that he is not interested in it. Instead, he wants to leave the city. The reason for this is that his *puella*, Flora, has previously gone to the countryside:

Quae postquam apricos hilaris migravit in agros  
prataque multiplici mollia flore colit,  
o ego quam cupio totos perferre labores  
ruris et aestivi tedia ferre canis.<sup>51</sup>

49 Cf. Thurn N., *Neulatein und Volkssprachen. Beispiele für die Rezeption neusprachlicher Literatur durch die lateinische Dichtung Europas im 15.–16. Jahrhundert* (Munich: 2012) 143–157, and Pieper Ch., "Xandrae cesserunt illa vel illa simul. Landinos *Xandra* und die sogenannten *poeti medicei* (Ugolino Verino, Naldo Naldi und Alessandro Braccesi)", in Kofler W. – Novokhatko A. (eds.), *Cristoforo Landinos Xandra und die Transformationen römischer Liebesdichtung im Florenz des Quattrocento* (Tübingen: 2016) 61–80. Coppini D., "Cosimo togatus. Cosimo dei Medici nella poesia latina del Quattrocento", *Incontri triestini di filologia classica* 6, 2006–2007 (= *Atti della giornata di studio in onore di Laura Casarsa, Trieste, 19 gennaio 2007*, ed. L. Cristante – I. Filip) 101–119 shows the same dependence with respect to the image of Cosimo. The once seminal book by Bottigioni G., *La lirica latina in Firenze nella seconda metà del secolo XV* (Pisa: 1913) has by now only antiquarian value due to its outdated methodology.

50 On this poem, see Pieper, "Xandrae cesserunt" 69–70.

51 Braccesi, *Amores* 7, 27–30 (= *Carmina* 1, 7, 27–30). The verses are full of classical intertexts. For 'mollia prata' as part of a bucolic landscape (together with sources of water and a grove), cf. Virgil, *Eclogues* 10, 42–43 ('hic gelidi fontes, hic mollia prata, Lycori, / hic nemus [...]'). For the expression 'labores ruris', cf. Seneca's *Hercules furens* 929–931, Hercules' 'prayer for a new Golden Age'. Fitch J.G., *Seneca's Hercules Furens. A Critical Text with Introduction and Commentary* (Ithaca – London: 1987) 361 classifies the "rus" as harmless or innocent ('[...] alta pax gentes alat; / ferrum omne teneat ruris innocui labor / ensesque lateant [...]'). For the wish to endure the heat brought by the Dog Star without

After she has travelled happily to the sunny fields and decorated the soft meadows with colourful flowers, o how much do I wish to endure all labours of the countryside and the annoyance of the Dog Star in the summer.

The parallel of Braccesi's *puella* with Xandra, whose arrival in Fiesole makes the meadows blossom, is more than obvious. Indeed, Braccesi's poem can serve as additional evidence for the interpretation offered above of Xandra as a nymph. Obviously Braccesi understood Landino's poem in a similar way when he rendered more explicit the association of his beloved with a nymph:

Naiades hanc ducunt circum de more choreas  
 mutatisque canunt carmina docta notis.  
 Pan ovium custos, Fauni Satyrique bicornes  
 cunctorumque simul rustica turba deum  
 illius a facie nequeunt avertere visum  
 suspirant forma dispereuntque nova.<sup>52</sup>

The Naiads are leading their round dance around her and sing learned songs with a changed tune. Pan, the shepherd, Fauns, and Satyrs with two horns on their heads, and with them the rustic host of all the other gods cannot avert their eyes from her face; they sigh and perish due to the unknown beauty.

If in Landino's poem the impression of Xandra being the focus of the round dance is triggered by the word order (Xandra's name in the middle of the poem), in Braccesi's verses their *chorus* is literally arranged around Flora. She stands in the centre of the group and is hence automatically part of the group of nymphs for the viewer. That she is indeed recognisable as such, is expressed through the following verses mentioning the prototypical male deities and

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protection, cf. the description of the rural god Priapus in Tibullus, *Elegies* 1, 4, 6 ('nudus et aestivi tempora sicca canis') with 'aestivi [...] canis' in the same metrical position.

52 Braccesi, *Amores* 7, 41–46 (= *Carmina* 1, 7, 41–46). The verses link the poem to the bucolic tradition, as they echo closely Calpurnius Siculus' second eclogue (2, 12–14): 'convenit umbrosa quicumque sub ilice lentus / pascit oves, Faunusque pater Satyrique bicornes / affuerunt sicco Dryades pede, Naiades udo'. Moreover, the expression 'Pan, ovium custos' is only attested in classical Latin, but in a very prominent place: in Virgil's *Georgics* 1, 17, Pan is invoked (in the same metrical position) as the inspiring deity for the poem.

semi-deities of the woods staring at her in excitement, a reference to the manifold stories of nymphs being the victims of rape by satyrs or fauns.<sup>53</sup>

Between the verses describing the springing of flowers and the ones on the dance of the Naiads, Braccesi has added six extraordinarily dense lines. In these, Flora is said to pick the flowers she has just let sprout and to bind them into a garland for her head:

Lilias quae manibus nunc candida carpit eburnis  
 nunc legit et violas purpureasque rhasas,  
 nunc vario pulchras contexens flore corollas  
 imponit capiti pulchrior illa suo  
 et modo narcissum viridi perfundit achanto:  
 omnia sic late complet odore loca.<sup>54</sup>

Sometimes she chooses lilies which she radiant gathers with her white hands, and violets and purple roses, then she braids the many flowers into beautiful little crowns and puts the more than pretty one on her head, or she sprinkles daffodils on green acanthus: like this, she fills the whole place far and wide with fragrance.

The catalogue of flowers is impressive and adds to the impression of a perfect landscape.<sup>55</sup> Additionally, its thick metapoetic meaning adds an extra layer to the imagery we saw in Landino's poem. Flora is not only the nymph-like being who is stimulating nature to blossom and thus a symbol for the inspiring power of the beloved elegiac girl, but she also picks the flowers she herself has created, thus receiving what she herself has inspired. Thirdly, her name is Flora, which means that the flowers she allows to grow and picks are she herself.

53 Kramer, "Nymphen" 474 mentions this motif as typical for nymphs since antiquity. Larson, *Greek Nymphs* 155–156 recalls several of Pan's unsuccessful attempts to abduct nymphs (Syrinx, Echo, and Pitys).

54 Braccesi, *Amores* 7, 35–40 (= *Carmina* I, 7, 35–40).

55 The combination of roses, violets, and lilies is rather topical, especially in Christian authors describing the paradise, and often explained allegorically (meaning love, humility, and chastity). An interesting pretext for Braccesi's combination is Naldo Naldi's *Elegia* III, 2, 11–12, a text describing the Mugello as a terrestrial paradise (see note 44 above): 'illic et violas cernas viguise perennes / mixtaque puniceis lilia cana rosis' ('there you will also recognise that eternal violets are in full bloom, and white lilies are mixed with purple roses'). The very rare combination of daffodil and acanthus in one single verse refers to Virgil, *Georgics* IV, 123 where the two plants are the first and the last word of the hexameter, within a passage in which Virgil (in the form of a *praeteritio*) sketches a rich garden.

Thus, Braccesi's six verses metaphorically enclose three functions of an elegiac *puella*: she is inspiration, object, and the first and foremost addressee ('reader', as the double meaning of the word 'legit' in v. 36 suggests) of the poetry written by the male elegiac speaker. If all three functions are fulfilled, fragrant odours spread everywhere, a metaphor for the diffusion Braccesi wanted to achieve for his poetry. With this passage, Braccesi seems to react to Petrarch's *Canzoniere* with the notorious Laura-landscapes formed by assonances of her name (*l'aura, laurus, loro* etc.) and which symbolise her all-encompassing presence for Petrarch's speaker.<sup>56</sup>

But Flora is an even more speaking name within the historical context in which Braccesi publishes his poems. *Amores* 7 is part of the earlier version of the collection which Braccesi in 1477 dedicated to Francesco Sassetti, a successful Florentine banker and close friend of Lorenzo de' Medici.<sup>57</sup> It is precisely for this intellectual context that Botticelli would paint his masterful allegorical painting *Primavera* on which Flora also figures prominently (as she will on the slightly later *Birth of Venus*). The *Primavera* [Fig. 6.1] is traditionally dated to around the year 1482, although Horst Bredekamp in his monograph has offered strong evidence for a slightly later date.<sup>58</sup> On the right side of Botticelli's painting, the metamorphosis of the nymph Chloris is depicted, who is desired and pursued by the god Zephyrus. As a consequence, she is transformed into the goddess Flora who spreads a multitude of diverse flowers over the earth. In this contribution, it is not possible to enter into the huge number of interpretations that have been offered for the painting.<sup>59</sup> It is without doubt that

56 Cf. for this concept, e.g., Küpper J., "Mundus imago laurae. Petrarca's Sonett 'Per mezz'i boschi' und die Modernität des Canzoniere", *Romanische Forschungen* 104 (1992) 52–88.

57 On the publication history see Perosa A., "Braccesi (Braccese, Bracci, Braccio, Braccia; Braccius, de Braccesis, Brachiensius), Alessandro", in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani* 13 (1971) 602–608, here 604; the *Amores* are part of an edition in three books of Braccesi's poems which is transmitted in two versions: first version 1477 (first book dedicated to Sassetti, books two and three to Lorenzo de' Medici), second version ca. 1487 (dedicated entirely to the then adolescent Guidobaldo da Montefeltro).

58 Bredekamp H., *Sandro Botticelli, Primavera. Florenz als Garten der Venus* (Berlin: 2009) 35. Bredekamp thinks that Botticelli would not have been able to paint the flowers in his painting with so many details if he had not known the so-called Portinari-Altarpiece by Hugo van der Goes which arrived in Florence from Ghent in May 1483, and thus considers this moment the *terminus post quem* for the *Primavera*. Further, Bredekamp on stylistic grounds dates the *Birth of Venus* earlier than the *Primavera* (ca. 1482) – but these details are not particularly relevant for my argument.

59 For a concise overview of major trends, see chapter 15 ("La Primavera. Das medicische Florenz als irdischer Heilsstaat") in Leuker T., *Bausteine eines Mythos. Die Medici in Dichtung und Kunst des 15. Jahrhunderts* (Cologne etc.: 2007) 259–288.



FIGURE 6.1 Sandro Botticelli, *La Primavera* (ca. 1482). Tempera on panel, 202 × 314 cm. Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi.

Botticelli's painting was influenced by a vast number of literary texts that were *en vogue* in the intellectual circles of Lorenzo's Florence. Apart from classical authors such as Horace (*Ode* 1, 30) and Lucretius, or late antique writers such as Martianus Capella, Angelo Poliziano's *Stanze per la giostra* and his *Silva Rusticus* with the description of an idealized bucolic landscape have been identified as important sources for Botticelli.<sup>60</sup> In the following, I merely want to suggest that Braccesi's *Amores*, a text that to my knowledge has not been connected to Botticelli's programmatic painting thus far, was also composed within the same cultural context by a poet who had very close connections to the Laurentine circle including Angelo Poliziano and could have been known (directly or indirectly) to the painter. Moreover, the protagonist of the *Amores* is called Flora – even if she clearly is not Botticelli's goddess, but a mortal

60 Cf., e.g., Dempsey C., *The Portrayal of Love. Botticelli's Primavera and Humanist Culture at the Time of Lorenzo the Magnificent* (Princeton: 1992) 20–49 (chapter 1: "Poetry as Painting").



elegiac *puella*.<sup>61</sup> There are indeed some parallels between the poem analysed above and Botticelli's *Primavera*.

First, as we have seen, Braccesi's Flora is closely associated with the nymphs – one could speak of the transformation of an elegiac *puella* into a nymph, whereas Botticelli's Flora is the transformation of a nymph into a goddess. This part of the *Primavera*, as has been acknowledged by almost all interpreters, is informed by Ovid's *Fasti* in which Flora narrates her metamorphosis from Chloris into Flora, as well as the sexual violence that accompanied it.<sup>62</sup> Of course, in Braccesi's poem, Flora never changed her identity as radically and was always called Flora, but the possibility of rape by the satyrs and fauns is, as we have seen, present in *Amores* 7. In *Amores* 9, 17–32 the idea of a possible metamorphosis is spelled out as a menace towards Flora. In an enumeration, the speaker gives exempla of mythological figures who have not answered the prayers of their lovers: Daphne, Syrinx, Narcissus, and Cephalus were punished by the gods. He concludes: 'crede mihi, similis tibi sors miserabilis instat, / ni minuas tantum, Flora, supercilium' ('believe me, a similar fate awaits you if you do not lower your haughty eyebrow, Flora').<sup>63</sup> The poem, however, appears only in the second version of the *Amores* of 1487. If a link with Botticelli's painting is plausible, then in this case the dependency would be reversed: the picture with the explicit transformation of Chloris into Flora might have invited Braccesi to intensify the theme of metamorphosis in his collection.

61 Perhaps this difference is smaller than it seems if one takes Giovanni Boccaccio's successful *De mulieribus claris* into account, ed. V. Zaccaria in *Tutte le opere di Giovanni Boccaccio*, vol. 10 (Milan: 1970). In chapter 1, 64, Flora is portrayed, and as we saw above in his *Ninfale*, Boccaccio again does not credit his protagonist with divinity. For Boccaccio, Flora is a prostitute, as the title already suggests ('De Flora meretrice dea florum et Zephiri coniuge'). The story of the metamorphosis of Chloris (Clora for Boccaccio) into the goddess Flora is said to have been a tale invented to attribute honours to her that she did not deserve. For, as Boccaccio continues: 'Qua seducti fallacia, eam, que vivens fonices coluerat, a quibuscunque etiam pro minima stipe prostrata, quasi suis alis zephyrus illam in celum detulerit, cum Iunone regina deabusque aliis sedere arbitrati sunt.' ('The general public was misled by this deception. Flora, who during her lifetime had lived in brothels and had debased herself with any and everyone for even the smallest fee, was now thought to sit with Queen Juno and the other goddesses, as if Zephyrus had borne her on his wings to heaven', trans. V. Brown in Boccaccio Giovanni, *Famous Women*, ed. and trans. V. Brown (Cambridge, MA – London: 2001).

62 Ovid, *Fasti* v, 195–206, beginning with 'Chloris eram quae Flora vocor' in v. 195 and the self-definition of Chloris as nymph in v. 197: 'Chloris eram, nympha campi felicitis'.

63 Braccesi, *Amores* 9, 21–22 (= *Carmina* 1, 9, 31–32).

Second, Braccesi's text emphasizes the inspiring power of Flora who transforms a world without flowers into one adorned with flowers. As I have tried to show, this theme was culturally marked in Braccesi's era as it repeated a similar idea in Landino's *Xandra* and had already become a core element of Florentine elegiac poetry. The same theme is visualized in Botticelli's painting.<sup>64</sup> That the goddess Flora spreads flowers over the earth is of course not surprising. But Frank Zöllner who follows Charles Dempsey in the proposal that one should read Botticelli's painting from right to left, has noted that 'in the upper right corner of Botticelli's picture [the one from which Zephyrus attacks Chloris, CP], there are neither blossoms nor oranges to be seen in the trees: indeed this area appears far from fruitful.'<sup>65</sup> That Botticelli indeed painted the transition from an (almost) blossomless nature to one in full bloom in the beginning of his visual narrative, connects the painting thematically with the poems discussed above.

The third aspect has to do with the political symbolism of the text and the image. Many interpreters have linked Botticelli's *Primavera* to the city of Florence under the regime of Lorenzo il Magnifico. However difficult, if not impossible it is to find one exact meaning of Botticelli's painting, most specialists agree that it is an idealisation of Florence, a depiction of a kind of golden era.<sup>66</sup> As Charles Burroughs has put it: 'Botticelli had the goal – which would be validated by time – of producing a work of universal significance, a work for the ages. And this made it all the more effective as a symbol of Laurentine Florence, as Lorenzo, following Augustus, well knew.'<sup>67</sup> An important key for such an understanding is Flora whose name is easily relatable to the

64 Dempsey, *Portrayal of Love* 149–50 is close to linking the poem with elegy when he reads the assault of Zephyr as 'a metaphor for the violent passions, uncertainties, and tears of the first onslaught of love'. The formulation could serve for a reading of love elegy as a kind of fictitious "Entwicklungsroman" as proposed by Pieper, "*Xandrae cesserunt*" 77. But Dempsey links it to Poliziano, *Stanze per la giostra* 1.44, who varies the topic by saying that Simonetta Vespucci (who served as inspiration for Botticelli's female protagonists, e.g. the Venus of the *Primavera*) changed the air around her with her gaze ('l'aier d'intorno si fa tutto ameno').

65 Zöllner F., *Botticelli. Images of Love and Spring* (Munich etc.: 1998) 57–58.

66 See, however, Leuker, *Bausteine eines Mythos* 288 who believes that the earthly Florence, though highly idealised in Botticelli's painting, is only a precursor of the perfection of God's paradise ('die Vorstufe der himmlischen Herrlichkeit').

67 Burroughs C., "Talking with Goddesses. Ovid's *Fasti* and Botticelli's *Primavera*", *Word & Image* 28, 1 (2012) 71–83, here 78.

city's name.<sup>68</sup> Nowhere in Braccesi's text is Flora directly linked to the city, but a contemporary public, accustomed to frequent identifications like *Cosmus* (i.e. κόσμος, "world") for Cosimo de' Medici or *laurus* (laurel) for Lorenzo,<sup>69</sup> would be invited to think of a speaking name anyway. Moreover, in Naldo Naldi's *Eclogues* 3 and 5 (written in the 1460s) the nymph Anthea (from ἄνθος, "flower") has been identified as representing Florence by Leonard Grant.<sup>70</sup> And if one is willing to interpret Flora's name as a speaking one, one might think of Landino's poem 11, 25 in which the nymphs do not represent love poetry anymore, but a new project of a matured poet, i.e., the exaltation of Florence and the Medici in the third book of the *Xandra*. Braccesi's edition of his poems in three books confines love elegy to the first, whereas the second and third are entitled *Epistulae ad amicos* and *Epigrammata*. As I have shown elsewhere, with this structure, he reacted to Landino's programmatic turn from love to society.<sup>71</sup> However, this Landinian movement was never meant to undermine the value of love poetry as a genre worthy of being treated by the best poets. Of all, Alessandro Braccesi showed this most clearly by giving his elegiac girl a name connecting her to the city he had served for his entire life and which he, as many of his contemporaries living under the regime of Lorenzo de' Medici, wanted to extoll as the ideal place of *humanitas*.<sup>72</sup>

68 Cf. Bredekamp, *Sandro Botticelli* 44; to corroborate his claim, he refers to the three laurel trees at the right margin of the painting (the alleged starting point for its interpretation) which symbolise Lorenzo de' Medici.

69 Examples for these metonymies are countless. I give one of each: for Cosimo = "world" cf. Naldi Naldo, *Bucolica – Volaterrais – Hastiludium – Carmina varia*, ed. W.L. Grant (Florence: 1974) 21–58, *Bucolica* 5, 68 ('Cosmo, qui mundi mensuram nomine implet', 'Cosimo, who with his name fills the measure of the world'); for Lorenzo = "laurel" cf. Verino, *Flametta* 1, 1, 23 ('per te, Laurenti, laurus parnasia floret', 'because of you, Lorenzo, the laurel of the Parnassus flourishes').

70 Grant, "Major Poems" 148–149. The identification is indeed straightforward, as Anthea is introduced as 'Nymphis Arni formosior una' ('prettier than the other Nymphs of the Arno', 3, 4) who is said to have been born from blood that was both royal and that of shepherds ('pastorum genus illa trahens de sanguine regum', 3, 5), an allusion to Rome's first king Romulus who was brought up by the shepherd Faustulus.

71 Pieper, "*Xandrae cesserunt*" 75–76.

72 Similarly, in Naldi, *Bucolica* 5, 29–30, a shepherd who is in love with Anthea (= Florence) and whom Grant identifies convincingly with Cosimo, promises her that he will always venerate her as Artemis in Fiesole, thus also mixing a female figure representing Florence with the divine world of pastoral Fiesole ('o nemorum virgo Fesulum tu Delia nobis / semper eris').

#### 4 Summary

As we have seen, in Florentine elegies of the Quattrocento nymphs are evoked in quite diverse ways. First, they mark the excellence of the deceased, as divine beings would only engage with the affairs of truly great men (and women) gifted with humanistic ethos. Second, they inspire amorous poetry by favouring both the poet (as a kind of Muse) and the object of his love (the elegiac *puella*), hence stressing not only their distinctiveness, but also the worthiness of the elegiac genre as such. Third, they denote idealised bucolic landscapes which in the Florentine context regularly symbolise the cultural and political achievements of the ruling Medici family who have managed to create a paradise on earth. Fourth, they can even represent the city as such, thus representing an almost paradoxical desire of humanist poetics: poets want to fulfill the Horatian and Petrarchan model in retiring from the masses to lonely groves, and at the same time serve the city and her rulers as part of the representative group of intellectuals who form the current cultural discourse. The transitional nature of nymphs between the world of gods and men seems a fitting metaphor for all these diverging aims that appear to converge on one point: the alleged elevation men receive when in contact with these nymphs. Thus this marking of grandeur might be one of the most important meanings of nymphs in the context I have investigated in this contribution.

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## An Epiphanic Figure with the Power to Bind: Lia's Role in Boccaccio's *Comedia delle ninfe fiorentine*

Tobias Leuker

In all of Dante Alighieri's work, nymphs appear only once, in the final section of the *Purgatorio*, which is dedicated to Earthly Paradise. In *Pg.* XXXII 98, the four cardinal and the three theological virtues are called 'sette ninfe' ('seven nymphs').<sup>1</sup> Giovanni Boccaccio had this expression in mind,<sup>2</sup> when, in 1341/42, shortly after his return to Florence from Naples, he conceived the *Comedia delle ninfe fiorentine*.<sup>3</sup> In the course of this work, a *prosimetrum* that, in its poetic parts, is characterized by an exclusive use of *terza rima*,<sup>4</sup> it becomes evident that the figures mentioned in its title, seven young and amazingly beautiful "Florentine" women at the service of *Venus caelestis* (Divine Love), represent the seven virtues.<sup>5</sup> Each of the nymphs first tells a story and then recites a poem connected to it in an attempt to convert Ameto, a 'vagabundo giovane' ('vagabond youth'), to a virtuous way of life and lead him to God.<sup>6</sup>

- 1 That is, on the one hand, *Iustitia* (Justice), *Prudentia* (Prudence), *Fortitudo* (Strength), and *Temperantia* (Temperance); on the other, *Fides* (Faith), *Spes* (Hope), and *Caritas* (Charity). Cf. Bufano A., "Ninfa", in *Enciclopedia Dantesca*, ed. U. Bosco, 6 vols. (Rome: 1970–1978) vol. 4, 49. The quotations of the *Divine Comedy* are taken from: Dante Alighieri, *Commedia*, ed. A.M. Chiavacci Leonardi, 3 vols. (Milan: 1991–1997).
- 2 Cf. Velli G., "L'Ameto' e la pastorale. Il significato della forma [1977]", in idem, *Petrarca e Boccaccio. Tradizione, memoria, scrittura* (Padua: 1979) 172–185, here 182–184; Porcelli B., "Considerazioni sull'ordine nella *Comedia delle ninfe fiorentine*" [1986], in idem, *Dante maggiore e Boccaccio minore. Strutture e modelli* (Pisa: 1987) 136–146, here 136.
- 3 Boccaccio Giovanni, *Comedia delle ninfe fiorentine*, ed. A.E. Quaglio, in *Tutte le opere di Giovanni Boccaccio*, ed. V. Branca, 10 vols. (Milan: 1964–1998) vol. 2, 665–835 and 900–964. For the date of the work see Quaglio's remarks ibidem 667–668.
- 4 For a convincing explication of this particularity, see Carrai S., "Boccaccio e la tradizione del prosimetro. Un'ipotesi per la forma della *Comedia delle ninfe fiorentine*", *Rassegna europea di letteratura italiana* 29–30 (2007) 61–67.
- 5 They are denominated 'ninfe fiorentine' ('Florentine nymphs') and each of them is associated with a Florentine family, but they can also have mythical characteristics; cf. n. 33 below.
- 6 Boccaccio Giovanni, *L'Ameto*, trans. J. Serafini-Sauli (New York – London: 1985) 5. Cf. Boccaccio, *Comedia delle ninfe fiorentine* 684 (= III 4). See Surdich L., *Boccaccio* (Bari: 2001)



The name of the figure not only corresponds to that of a mythical king, Ἄδμητος or Admetus, but also – and this hitherto neglected fact, as we will see later in more detail, must have determined Boccaccio's onomastic choice – to a Greek adjective (ἄδμητος) signifying “unbound”.

Ameto, a hunter<sup>7</sup> (and not a ‘pastore’, as he is improperly called by some illustrious critics),<sup>8</sup> is particularly attracted to the nymph he meets first, Lia,

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59: ‘[...] la *Comedia delle ninfe fiorentine* è la storia di Ameto [...] che, da una condizione di brutalità bestiale, viene condotto, grazie all'incontro con sette ninfe rappresentanti le Virtù, alla piena umanità e, infine, gli è concessa l'occasione di attingere alla massima felicità spirituale, la contemplazione divina.’ (‘The *Comedia delle ninfe fiorentine* is the story of Ameto, who, grace to the encounter with seven nymphs representing the Virtues, is guided from a condition of bestial brutality to the full expansion of his human nature; at the end, he obtains the privilege to reach the highest degree of spiritual happiness, i.e. divine contemplation; my translation). The structure of Boccaccio's fiction and a remark in its prologue (cf. Boccaccio, *Comedia delle ninfe fiorentine* 680 [= 112], and Boccaccio, *L'Ameto* 2) that asserts the humility of the work's style (‘con voce convenevole al mio umele stato [...] canterò’, ‘with a voice fitting to my humble condition [...] I shall sing’) suggest that the Italian author also wanted to respect the definition of “comedia” offered by the *Epistola a Cangrande della Scala*, a Latin letter transmitted among Dante's writings and composed either by himself or by a person close to him, see Dante Alighieri, *Epistole*, ed. A. Frugoni – G. Brugnoli, in idem, *Opere minori*, ed. P.V. Mengaldo et al., 2 vols. (Milan – Naples: 1979–1988) vol. 2, 505–643, here 598–643. The definition reads: ‘Comedia vero inchoat asperitatem alicuius rei, sed eius materia prospere terminatur [...]. Similiter differunt [sc. tragedia et comedia] in modo loquendi: elate et sublime tragedia; comedia vero remisse et humiliter [...]’ (ibidem 616/618). J. Marchand translates as follows: ‘[...] comedy begins with harshness in some thing, whereas its matter ends in a good way. [...] They differ also in the way of speaking: the tragedy is elevated and sublime, the comedy loose and humble [...]’ (quoted from: <http://faculty.georgetown.edu/jod/cangrande.english.html>, 24.05.2017). Surdich, *Boccaccio* 67, rightly observes that, if for Ameto the *Comedia delle ninfe fiorentine* is a “comedia” in the meaning attributed to that term by the *Epistola a Cangrande*, this is not true for Boccaccio's alter ego, the narrator. At the end of the work, indeed, the figure representing the author not only claims to have followed the nymphs' narrations and Ameto's purification from behind a bush, but establishes a sharp contrast between the world of the nymphs and the sadness of his everyday life, dominated by his grim father. For an interesting interpretation of this final statement, see Del Giudice L., “Boccaccio's *Comedia delle ninfe fiorentine* and Literary Dissociation: to Allegorize or not to Allegorize?”, *Carte italiane* 1, 3 (1982) 15–27, here 23–24.

7 Cf. Boccaccio, *Comedia delle ninfe fiorentine* 684–685 (= 111 4–11); Velli, “L’Ameto’ e la pastorale” 70; Orvieto P., “Boccaccio mediatore di generi o dell'allegoria d'amore”, *Interpres* 2 (1979) 7–104, here 27; Del Giudice, “Boccaccio's *Comedia*” 16.

8 E.g. Branca V., *Giovanni Boccaccio. Profilo biografico* (Florence: 1977) 61; Quaglio, in Boccaccio, *Comedia delle ninfe fiorentine* 672 and 676; Surdich L., *La cornice di Amore. Studi sul Boccaccio* (Pisa: 1987) 120; Tateo F., *Boccaccio* (Bari: 1998) 55; Battaglia Ricci L., *Boccaccio* (Rome: 2000) 101; Surdich, *Boccaccio* 58–59.

who, in a later moment of the work, when she will have told her story, will claim to represent Faith. Before the young man catches sight of her, he hears her singing;<sup>9</sup> as soon as he gets the opportunity to lay eyes on her, he is captured by her splendid appearance. In the narration, the sudden and powerful effects of the latter are underlined by a change of tense, from *passato remoto* to present ('rimase', 'si sostenne', 'fu [...] uscito', 'si pose' > 'vede', 'discerneli', 'loda'):

Egli [sc. Ameto] appena, aiutandolo la forte mazza, in piè rimase, ma pur si sostenne; e poi che fu del preso stordimento uscito, quivi, senza niente parlare a quelle [sc. a Lia e le sue compagne], si pose sopra l'erbe a sedere; e, rimirando la bella ninfa con l'altre sopra gli ornati prati sollazzevolmente giucante, la vede di quel colore nel viso lucente, del quale si dipigne l'Aurora, vegnente Febo col nuovo giorno, e i biondi capelli, con vezzose ciocche sparti sopra le candide spalle, ristretti da fronzuta ghirlanda di ghiandifera quercia discerneli; e rimirandola tutta con occhio continuo, tutta in sé la loda, e insieme con lei la voce, il modo, le note e le parole della udita canzone [...].<sup>10</sup>

He [sc. Ameto] could barely stand on his feet with the help of his strong stick, but he remained erect, and when he had fully recovered from his dizziness, without a word to them [sc. to Lia and her friends] he sat himself down right there on the grass; and admiring the nymph as she merrily played with the others in the splendid fields, he studied her face which was aglow with that colour by which Aurora paints herself when Apollo is coming with the new day. And he saw her blond hair flung over her ivory shoulders with graceful locks and gathered in a garland of oak, laden with acorns. And admiring all of her with an attentive eye, he praised every part of her to himself, commending together with her appearance her voice, her manner, and the notes and words of the completed song.<sup>11</sup>

In the thirteenth century, epiphanies like this were a typical element of *Dolce Stil Novo* poetry. One of the most famous texts employing the topos is Guido Cavalcanti's sonnet *Chi è questa che vèn, ch'ogn'uom la mira*, a poem that comments on the arrival of a "donna gentile" using language reminiscent of the

9 Cf. Boccaccio, *Comedia delle ninfe fiorentine* 685 (= III 9).

10 Cf. ibidem 688–689 (= V 3–4). The dazzling plenty of the visual impressions given by Lia is emphasised by the extreme retardation of the verb 'discerneli'.

11 Boccaccio, *L'Ameto* 10.

Song of Songs.<sup>12</sup> Boccaccio shows his indebtedness to both Cavalcanti's verses and their principal biblical source in chapter xv of the *Comedia delle ninfe fiorentine*, in a phrase that compares a sumptuous ceremony witnessed from some distance by Ameto, the arrival of the last two nymphs at the place where the seven narrations will be delivered, with the *introitus* of two brides.<sup>13</sup>

Typical traits of *Dolce Stil Novo* lyrics are the elevation of the *amata* to an angelic being and the scarcity or even absence of concrete indications concerning her physical appearance.<sup>14</sup> While there are many references to biblical and theological concepts and religious language, the poems completely

12 Cavalcanti Guido, "Rime IV", in *Poeti del Dolce Stil Novo*, ed. M. Marti (Florence: 1969) 133–134. The first quartet of the sonnet reads: 'Chi è questa che vèn, ch'ogn'om la mira, / che fa tremar di chiaritate l'âre / e mena seco Amor, sì che parlare / null'omo pote, ma ciascun sospira?' In one of the translations of the poem we can find in Ezra Pound's poetic works (cf. Anderson D., *Pound's Cavalcanti. An Edition of the Translation, Notes and Essays* [Princeton: 1983] 45), the quoted verses read: 'Who is she coming, drawing all men's gaze, / Who makes the air one trembling clarity, / Till none can speak, but each sighs piteously, / Where she leads Love adown her trodden ways?'). Evidently, the incipit alludes to *Canticum Canticorum* 6.9, 'Quae est ista quae progreditur quasi aurora consurgens, pulchra ut luna, electa ut sol, terribilis ut acies ordinata?' ('Who is she that cometh forth as the morning rising, fair as the moon, bright as the sun, terrible as an army set in array?'), and *Canticum Canticorum* 8.5, 'Quae est ista quae ascendit de deserto, deliciis affluens et nixa super dilectum suum?' ('Who is that coming up from the wilderness, leaning on her beloved?'); see Marti's notes, *ad locum*.

13 Cf. Boccaccio, *Comedia delle ninfe fiorentine* 716 (= xv 2–5): '[...] Lia di lontano due ne [= due donne] vide a loro con lento passo venire; per che all'altre con umile parlamento: – Giovani – disse, – leviani; andiamo ad onorare le vegnenti compagne. – Alla cui voce rivolte e levate, con simile passo verso di quelle, da loro già vedute, n'andarono, solo Ameto lasciando sopra la fonte. E giunte ad esse e quelle con accoglienze raccolte piacevoli, alli loro luoghi insieme voltarono i passi; le quali vegnenti con non altra andatura che soglia fare novella isposa, s'approssimano alla fonte. Laonde Ameto, riguardandole, in sé moltiplicando ammirazioni, quasi di senno esce; e appena potendo credere ch'elle siano altro che dee, tutto fu mosso a dimandarne Lia.' Cf. Boccaccio, *L'Ameto* 35 (slightly modified): '[...] Lia saw two maidens advancing slowly toward them, and she humbly said to the others: "Ladies, let us rise and go to greet our arriving companions." At her voice they turned and rose, for they had already noticed the maidens, and they moved toward them with a similar slow step, leaving Ameto alone by the font. And having come up to these maidens and given them warm welcome, all together they turned back toward their places; and with a bearing customary to a bride, the two maidens drew near to the fountain. As he looked at them, increasing his admiration, Ameto nearly lost his senses. He was scarcely able to believe them to be anything other than goddesses and he was prompted to question Lia'.

14 Cf. Marti M., *Storia dello Stil Novo*, 2 vols. (Lecce: 1973) vol. 1, 121–183.

lack allusions to classical mythology, with the exception of references to the iconography of Amor, the god of love.

Boccaccio's early lyrics, part of his Neapolitan production, are closely related to the *stilnovisti* tradition but combine it with a wide range of mythological references. One of the sonnets written before the poet's return to Tuscany not only offers a particularly striking example of this mixture, but also anticipates many characteristics of the *Comedia delle ninfe fiorentine* in general and the nymphs' epiphanies (not only Lia's) in particular:

Il Cancro ardea, passata la sext'hora,  
spirava Zephiro e il tempo era bello,  
quieto il mar, e in su-lito di quello,  
in parte dove il sol non era anchora  
vidd'io colei che 'l ciel di sé innamora  
e 'n più donne far festa, et l'aureo vello  
le cingea 'l capo in guisa che capello  
del vago nodo non usciva fuora.  
Neptunno, Glauco, Phorco et la gran Theti  
dal mar lei riguardavan sì contenti,  
che dir parevon: – Giove, altro non voglio –.  
Io, da un ronchio, fissi agli occhi lieti  
sì adoppiati haveva e sentimenti,  
ch'un saxo paravamo io et lo scoglio.<sup>15</sup>

Cancer was burning, noon had passed, Zephyr was blowing and the weather was fine; the sea was calm, and on its shore, in a part still unreached by the sunlight, I saw the one who enamours the sky; and her golden hair girdled her head in a way that no streak was jutting out of the nice bun.

Neptune, Glaucus, Phorcus and great Tethys were watching her from the sea with such a delight, that they seemed to say: 'Jupiter, I do not want anything else.' Sitting on a rock and gazing at her eyes, I was so inebriated

15 Boccaccio Giovanni, *Rime*, ed. R. Leporatti (Florence: 2013) 110–111 (= *Rime* XXXII [111]). As Tufano I., 'Quel dolce canto'. *Lecture tematiche delle 'Rime' di Boccaccio* (Florence: 2006) 41, rightly underlines, a good deal of Boccaccio's early lyrics are characterised by a 'modulo epifanico'. Further on in her book (cf. *ibidem* 58), the philologist presents a convincing comparison between the speaker of *Rime* XXXII (111) and the figure of Ameto.

by that experience that my person and the cliff seemed to form a single rock.<sup>16</sup>

In this poem the speaker is looking back to an experience which took place on the shore of what seems to be the Gulf of Naples. While sitting on a rock moistened by the waves, he caught sight ('vidd'io', v. 5) of a woman of divine beauty who was amusing herself with other women on the beach. Some marine deities witnessing the scene were so strongly dazzled by the sight of the divine woman that they confessed to have reached a state of perfect beatitude. As a human being, the speaker says, he could not resist the powerful vision. He asserts that he was petrified. In the final part of his text, Boccaccio modifies a famous *stilnovisti* model. In a sonnet written by the "father" of the movement, Guido Guinizzelli,<sup>17</sup> the author's alter ego claims that the 'bel saluto' ('gentle greeting') of his *donna* and her 'gentil sguardo' ('noble eyes') impressed him in such a profound way as to transform him into something like a statue of bronze ('statua d'ottono'), a man without breath and life ('ove vita né spirito non ricorre').<sup>18</sup>

The effect of Lia and her friends on Ameto is hardly weaker – the sight of the young women provokes the hunter's 'stordimento' ('dizziness') –,<sup>19</sup> and this is by far not the only parallel between the scenery described in the paragraph of the *Comedia delle ninfe fiorentine* quoted above and the one evoked in the Neapolitan sonnet: in both cases, an extraordinary female beauty, accompanied by other women, suddenly comes into the focus of a male observer, who is particularly fascinated by her hairstyle.<sup>20</sup> The dominance of the visual

16 My translation.

17 Dante praises Guinizzelli as 'padre / mio e de li altri miei miglior che mai / rime d'amor usar dolci e leggiadre' (*Pg.* xxvi 97–99, 'father of mine and of all those poets better than me who have ever written sweet and beautiful vernacular verses'; my translation).

18 Cf. Guinizzelli Guido, *Rime*, no. vi, 'Lo vostro bel saluto e 'l bel sguardo', vv. 1 and 12–13; see *Poeti del Dolce Stil Novo* 68–69, and Tufano, 'Quel dolce canto' 58.

19 Boccaccio, *Comedia delle ninfe fiorentine* 689 (= v 3); Boccaccio, *L'Ameto* 10.

20 Tufano, 'Quel dolce canto' 47–49, offers a rich comparison between the epiphanic passages of Boccaccio's *Comedia* and another of his sonnets that anticipates even more elements of the later prosimetrum, but differs substantially from it for being focused on acoustic rather than on visual impressions. In that poem, the author's alter ego once again evokes an experience in a landscape that can be identified with the Gulf of Naples. This time, however, the *locus amoenus* is not the gulf itself, but a wood near the coast. See Boccaccio, *Rime* 62–63 (= xviii [iv]): 'Guidommi Amor, ardendo anchora il sole, / sopra l'acque di Julio, in un mirteto, / et era il mar tranquillo e il ciel quieto, / quantunque alquanto Zephir, come suole, / movesse agli arbuscei le cime sole, / quando mi parve udire un canto lieto /

impressions in Ameto's mind is confirmed by the wording of the confession that affirmatively concludes the hunter's reflection on whether he, a man 'in abito rozzo, ne' boschi nato e nutricato' ('crude in [...] dress, born and nourished in the woods'),<sup>21</sup> should be allowed to follow a woman of Lia's dignity: 'Seguirò adunque quello che piace agli occhi miei' ('I shall therefore pursue that which delights my eyes').<sup>22</sup> Within the reflection just mentioned, we find the first occurrence of the word "ninfa" in Boccaccio's text after its title, and it may be no coincidence that it figures in a phrase of Ameto's that insists on the epiphanic character of his first encounter with Lia: 'la bella ninfa, nuovamente a' miei occhi apparita' ('the beautiful nymph just appeared to my eyes').<sup>23</sup> The status of virgin demigoddesses commonly attributed to nymphs in the mythological tradition fits very well with the first two nouns that characterize Lia and her friends: the narrator introduces them as 'giovinette' ('young maidens') and adds somewhat later that Ameto considered them 'dee' ('goddesses').<sup>24</sup> When the hunter, after an extraordinarily bright morning, spent in a stupendously prosperous nature that had given him more bountiful prey than ever before, first heard Lia's chant, he was entirely convinced that he was living in a landscape blessed by the gods.<sup>25</sup> One is tempted to say that, thanks to Boccaccio's

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tanto, che simil non fu consueto / d'udir già mai nelle mortali scuole, // per ch'io: – Angela forse o nimpha o dea / canta con seco in questo loco eletto –, / meco diceva, – degli antichi amori –, / Quinci madonna in assai bel recepto / del bosco ombroso, in su l'herb'e in su' fiori, / vidi cantando, et con altre sedea.' ('When the sun still was burning, Amor led me to a myrtle wood above the waters of Julio; the sea was calm and the sky quiet, although Zephyr slightly moved the tops of the bushes, when it seemed to me to hear a chant so full of joy that no mortal listener had ever heard anything similar. Therefore, I said to myself: "In this elected place, an angel perhaps or a nymph or a goddess is singing for her own pleasure about ancient love stories." Hence, I saw my lady singing in a lovely recess of the shadowy wood, where she was sitting with other maidens'; my translation).

21 Boccaccio, *Comedia delle ninfe fiorentine* 691 (= v 16); Boccaccio, *L'Ameto* 12.

22 Boccaccio, *Comedia delle ninfe fiorentine* 693 (= v 29); Boccaccio, *L'Ameto* 13.

23 Boccaccio, *Comedia delle ninfe fiorentine* 691 (= v 22); Boccaccio, *L'Ameto* 13 (slightly modified).

24 Boccaccio, *Comedia delle ninfe fiorentine* 685 (= III 13) and 686 (= III 16); Boccaccio, *L'Ameto* 6–7.

25 See Boccaccio, *Comedia delle ninfe fiorentine* 685 (= III 11, Ameto is speaking to himself): 'Iddii sono in terra discesi, e io più volte oggi l'ho conosciuto, ma nol credea; i boschi più pieni d'animali si sono dati che non soleano, e Febo più chiari n'ha porti i raggi suoi, e l'aure più soavemente m'hanno le fatiche levate, e l'erbe e' fiori, in quantità grandissima cresciuti più che l'usato, testimoniano la lor venuta.'; and Boccaccio, *L'Ameto* 6 (slightly modified): 'The gods have descended on earth. Indeed many times today I noticed this, but I did not believe it. The woods have seemed fuller of prey than usual, and Phoebus

intertextual intervention, the 'sette ninfe' have descended from Dante's Earthly Paradise and brought divine splendour to the landscape of the Florentine countryside.

The seven nymphs are described from Ameto's perspective, first Lia (surrounded by her friends), then, in much more detail, the other six, who, separated into three pairs, come to the place where Ameto's conversion to Divine Love is about to reach its conclusion.<sup>26</sup> Boccaccio found models for the extremely elaborate, sensually charged female portraits he included in his *Comedia* in medieval narrative fictions such as Bernardus Silvestris' *Cosmographia*, Alan of Lille's *Anticlaudianus* and John of Hauville's *Architrenius*, in *artes dictaminis* and in medieval Latin poetics.<sup>27</sup> By including these descriptions, which, as we have already noted, have no equivalent in the poems of *Dolce Stil Novo*, in a fiction whose essential content reveals itself to be a process of purification from sensual passion, Boccaccio claims that, for the majority of men (and women?), the love of a *creatura* is the prerequisite for ascending to the love of the *Creator* and thus reaching salvation. Such a message seems to underlie the story told by Mopsa, the nymph representing *prudencia*.<sup>28</sup> She delivers a narration on how she rescued Affron (whose name corresponds to the Greek adjective ἄφρων, "foolish"),<sup>29</sup> a silly man who preferred sailing on the unsteady waves of the sea to coming to the nearby coast where he would no longer be in danger. After many attempts to persuade him to leave the sea with the aid of her highly developed eloquence, Mopsa only succeeded in luring Affron to the coast by exposing her legs and breasts.<sup>30</sup>

Representing *fides*, commonly considered to be the highest of all virtues in medieval theology, Lia is the main figure responsible for Ameto's conversion.<sup>31</sup>

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has offered his brighter rays. The breezes have very gently swept away my fatigue, and the grass and flowers, grown thicker than usual, attest to their arrival.'

26 Cf. Boccaccio, *Comedia delle ninfe fiorentine* 689–690 (= v 3–13), 701–703 (= ix 13–29), 706–710 (= xii 2–31), 716–720 (= xv 5–26). The first pair joining Lia, her friends and Ameto is composed of Agapes (*Caritas*) and Adiona (*Temperantia*), the second by Emilia (*Iustitia*) and Fiammetta (*Spes*), the last (see above, n. 13) by Acrimonia (*Fortitudo*) and Mopsa (*Prudentia*); cf. Velli, "L'Ameto' e la pastorale" 180–181; Porcelli, "Considerazioni" 139.

27 Cf. Marti, *Storia dello Stil Novo* vol. 1, 126–135; Velli, "L'Ameto' e la pastorale" 179–180; Surdich, *La cornice di Amore* 127–130; Bruni F., *Boccaccio. L'invenzione della letteratura mezzana* (Bologna: 1990) 205–206.

28 Cf. Boccaccio, *Comedia delle ninfe fiorentine* 724–730 (= xviii).

29 On the etymology of his name, see Quaglio's note in Boccaccio, *Comedia delle ninfe fiorentine* 926.

30 Cf. Surdich, *Boccaccio* 60.

31 Cf. Boccaccio, *Comedia delle ninfe fiorentine* 686–688 (= iv).

At the end of her narration (the last of the seven), she confesses to have intonated the song by means of which she once induced Ameto to join her especially for the hunter, because she had already been in love with him when he saw her for the first time.<sup>32</sup> This confession makes it evident why the theme of that song had been her own person: she wanted Ameto to learn of her nature and abilities.

The starting point for the last line of argument of this essay is the final third of Lia's poetic self-portrait:

E ciò che 'n el fu rigido e silvestro,<sup>33</sup>  
cioè amore e 'l piacere ad altrui,  
questo m'è caro e più che altro destro. 45

Chiunque fia per sua virtù colui  
che degnerà al mio bel viso aprire  
gli occhi del core e ritenermi in lui,  
io gli farò quel diletto sentire  
che più suol essere agli amanti caro 50  
dopo l'acceso e suo forte disire.

Né per me sentirà mai nullo amaro  
tempo chi con saver la mia bellezza  
seguiterà, come già seguitaro  
color li qua', dopo lunga lassezza, 55  
lieti posai appresso i loro effetti  
nel ben felice della somma altezza.

Cotali affanni e sì fatti diletti  
dal padre trassi; e dalla madre tegno  
i miei giocondi e graziosi aspetti. 60

E la mia arte col sottile ingegno  
mi dier per nome Lia; e questo loco  
al mio piacere assai più ch'altro degno,

32 Cf. *ibidem* 818–819 (= XXXVIII 114).

33 The pronoun refers to Narciso (Narcissus), who, as Lia says in v. 22 of her song, was her brother. On the reasons that led Boccaccio to give a sister to Narcissus, who, according to the mythological tradition, was the only son of Cephisus and Liriope, see Surdich, *La cornice d'Amore* 121–125. In her verses, Lia calls herself a daughter of 'Cefiso' (v. 1) and 'Liriope' (v. 4). Later in the text, at the end of the story she tells in the circle of nymphs gathered around Ameto, she adds that the original name of her father was 'Angelo', and that he belonged to a Florentine family, the Regaletti; cf. Boccaccio, *Comedia delle ninfe fiorentine* 818 (= XXXVIII 111), and Quaglio's note *ibidem* 959.



io signoreggio, accesa di quel foco  
 del qual tutto arde il monte Citerea,  
 e quel mi move a far festa con gioco  
 e a servire all'amorosa dea.

65

Indeed, that which was hard and harsh in him [sc. in Narcissus] – love and the art of pleasing others – is dear to me and more welcome than anything else.

Whoever deems to open the eyes of his heart to my countenance and keep me in mind, to him I will offer that delight which is most cherished by lovers, when desire is strong and burning. Nor will he ever know bitterness because of me, if he will seek my beauty with wisdom, as it has already been sought by those whom I brought to their deserts, after long lassitude, in the happy blessings of the most sublime heights.

These troubles and such joys I took from my father; and from my mother I take my gay and graceful countenance. My art, along with my subtle intelligence, gave me the name Lia; and I rule this place, more worthy than any other of my beauty, bright with that fire in which all Mount Cytherea burns; and it is that fire that moves me to make feast with play and to serve the loving goddess.<sup>34</sup>

In the verses 61–62 of her song, Lia clearly invites Ameto (and Boccaccio, his readers) to search for an etymological explanation of her name. The hunter does not even try to resolve the riddle, and the philologists who have commented on the *Comedia* have shared his silence.

Since 'Lia' is a biblical name, at first glance it would seem most promising to take into account its literal meaning, which, according to Saint Jerome (and numerous medieval writers who quote him), is 'laboriosa' ('painful' or 'industrious').<sup>35</sup> But one is soon forced to recognize that there is no convincing way to associate Lia's 'arti' ('technical skills') and especially her 'sottile ingegno'

34 Boccaccio, *L'Ameto* 8–9 (slightly modified).

35 See Jerome, *Liber interpretationis Hebraicorum nominum*, ed. P. de Lagarde, in *S. Hieronymi Presbyteri Opera omnia. Pars I: Opera exegetica I* (Turnhout: 1959) 57–161, 68: 'Lia laboriosa', and, among numerous other medieval sources prior to Boccaccio, Isidor of Seville, *Etymologiae* VII 6.36: 'Lia laboriosa, utique generando. Plurimos enim dolores quam Rachel fecunditate pariendi experta est.' Cf. *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, trans. S.A. Barney et al. (Cambridge: 2005) 163: 'Leah "burdened by labour" as of childbearing, for she in her fecundity of childbearing experienced more pangs than Rachel.'

(‘subtle intelligence’) with her name if the meaning of the latter corresponds to one of the senses of the adjective derived from *labor*.

Many figures of the *Comedia delle ninfe fiorentine*, among them the nymphs Adiona and Agapes and Mopsa's lover Affron, bear (pseudo-)Greek names. Considering this, one could also assume a Greek etymon for ‘Lia’ and derive it from the verb λύω ‘I solve’. To corroborate this hypothesis, one could point out that the nymph representing *fides*, at the end of her story, claims to have drawn Ameto away from spiritual blindness: ‘Costui, seguitandomi, ho io tratto della mentale cecità [...]’ (‘As this youth followed me, I have carried him with my light from spiritual blindness [...]’).<sup>36</sup> This would, of course, be a merit perfectly ascribable to her ‘arti’ and her ‘sottile ingegno’. In my opinion, however, it is preferable to consider the latter parts of the passage whose beginning I cited a moment ago in order to resolve Lia’s (and Boccaccio’s) etymological riddle. In its entirety, the passage reads: ‘Costui, seguitandomi, ho io tratto della mentale cecità con la mia luce a conoscere le care cose, e volenteroso l’ho fatto a seguire quelle’ (‘As this youth followed me, I have carried him with my light from spiritual blindness to a knowledge of worthy matters, and I have made him willing to pursue these’).<sup>37</sup> I am convinced that Boccaccio wanted to induce the readership of his *Comedia* to associate the name of Ameto’s principal guide with words of Gallo-Roman origin or flavour that can be directly or indirectly traced back to the Latin etymon *ligare* (‘to bind’), i.e., verbs like the ancient French *liier*, the ancient Occitan *liar* or the ancient Siculo-Tuscan *liare*, if not with the ancient Occitan noun *lia* (‘tie’).<sup>38</sup> A strong support for this hypothesis is provided by the beginning of the section that in Boccaccio’s *Comedia* immediately follows the part dealing with the first encounter of Ameto and Lia and the reflections caused by that experience in the hunter’s mind. Taking up the narration again, Boccaccio’s alter ego not only explicitly speaks of a tie created between the two figures, but highlights this point by an *annominatio*, a rhetorical figure used very rarely throughout the book. The incipit of the paragraph reads: ‘Legato con nuovo legame si tornò Ameto alla sua casa’ (‘Bound

36 Boccaccio, *Comedia delle ninfe fiorentine* 819 (= XXXVIII 117); Boccaccio, *L’Ameto* 129.

37 Boccaccio, *Comedia delle ninfe fiorentine* 819 (= XXXVIII 117); Boccaccio, *L’Ameto* 129.

38 Admittedly, there is only one Italian text that documents the existence of *liare*, but it uses the verb in a striking context. A *canzone* written by Emperor Frederick II, *De la mia disianza*, contains the following passage: ‘Diviso m’è lo core / e lo corpo à ‘n ballia [sc. la creatura fine e pura che mi fa penare]; / tienmi e mi lia – forte incatenato’ (vv. 37–39: ‘The noble and pure creature which makes me suffer has divided my heart and has my body in her power; she keeps me and binds me with a strong chain’; my translation). For the text of the poem, see Panvini B., *Le rime della scuola siciliana*, 2 vols. (Florence: 1964) vol. 1, 157–159.

by a new bond, Ameto returns home').<sup>39</sup> In other words: Ameto-Ἀδμητος, "the Unbound", is no longer unbound. Lia has succeeded in tying him: now she can apply to the hunter the capacities she attributed to herself in verses 46–57 of her first song, and guide him to Heaven.

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39 Boccaccio, *Comedia delle ninfe fiorentine* 693 (= VI 1); Boccaccio, *L'Ameto* 15.

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## Renaissance Nymphs as Intermediaries in Early Modern German Territorial Politics

Andreas Keller

There is no genre like the eclogue to show the complex process of productive appropriation and modified reanimation of ancient forms. It predominantly shows shepherds with their sheep in a contemplative state of rest in nature, far away from the cities. As a mixed genre it has at its disposal a variety of techniques for describing the peaceful life of the countryside in poetic form, for discussing it in dialogue or praising it lyrically. Even the most famous and influential works of ancient pastoral literature, Theocritus's *Idylls* and Virgil's *Eclogues*,<sup>1</sup> however, include identifiable, albeit cryptic, statements concerning the urgent problems of society at the time of their origin: the shepherds address war, flight and questions of leadership.

"Eclogue" literally means "choice" or "selection" and thus from the beginning gives poetic licence to inflect, omit, or modify at will. The eclogue as a genre offered a great opportunity for poets and scholars to add new dimensions to the "rebirth" of antiquity in the Renaissance: the eclogue lent itself to linguistic reflection just as it served as a platform for voicing theories of the state. In the long period from the late middle ages to the early enlightenment, it was used and transformed all across Europe, from its Humanist beginnings in Italy to the highly diverse modes in which the reception of antiquity spread in the age of continual territorialisation or nationalisation.

The early modern period itself offers several Latin expressions for approaches to modelling the relationship between old and new, such as *imitatio*, *renovatio*, *innovatio*, or *reformatio*. It also offers categories of valuation in the sense of the (Neo-)Platonic hierarchy between an ideal "original" and its copy, which is lesser by virtue of its remove from the original. Terms like *aemulatio* imply that there is no perfect copy, no duplication of a unique identity, but that adaptation is possible through rewriting, translation, and transformation. Aby Warburg spoke of a more active and ongoing "Nachleben" of the ancient arts rather than their "renaissance" or "reception". The term *Nachleben* is itself difficult to translate and might be rendered as "survival", "continuity" or "afterlife and

1 Effe B. – Binder G., *Die antike Bukolik. Eine Einführung* (Munich – Zurich: 1989).

metamorphosis” of single images and motifs. Warburg also frequently refers to “emancipation” and “Austausch” (exchange).<sup>2</sup> In the context of postcolonial studies, more recent scholarship on cultural traditions and their transmission have favoured concepts such as “inculturation”, “acculturation” or “appropriation”, not, however, without once again activating a hierarchical model of a dominant, colonising hegemon and a subaltern, even colonised, object.

The following seeks to bring new material to these questions and to discuss in more detail the connections between retrospective patterns of reception and the intention to shape the present. My focus is on historico-cultural processes in the German-speaking world during the interesting late phase of the Renaissance in the seventeenth century. An exemplary and contrastive look at the type, role and function of nymphs in the German eclogues is ideally suited to make clear the deeper ties between religion, politics and literature in the process of the productive reception of antiquity. I proceed in six steps: (1) the traditional *imitatio* of the eclogue and a new prototype in the work of Martin Opitz; (2) German territorial questions and local nymph figures; (3) nymphs as guardians of secret knowledge; (4) nymphs and alchemical processes; (5) nymphs and Christianity: angels and pagan forms; (6) conclusion: the poet inspired by a nymph as advisor to the ruler.

## 1 The Traditional *Imitatio* of the Eclogue and a New Prototype in the Work of Martin Opitz

The “Renaissance” of ancient pastoral poetry appeared in the different areas of Europe in a decidedly staggered way: in Italy, the work of Dante Alighieri (1265–1321), Francesco Petrarca (1304–1374) and Jacopo Sannazaro (1458–1530) meant that there existed a diverse canon of texts as early as the young sixteenth century. In the territories of the “Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation”, on the other hand, the engagement with the ancient texts began, as did many other things, with a considerable delay.<sup>3</sup> Here, ancient pastoral themes and tropes in the manner of Theocritus and Virgil first emerged in

2 Cf. Schoell-Glass C., “Aby Warburg. Forced Identity and ‘Cultural Science’”, in Soussloff C. (ed.), *Jewish Identity in Art History* (Los Angeles – Berkeley: 1999) 218–233. On the question of nymphs, see Baert B., *Nymph. Motif, Phantom, Affect. A Contribution to the Study of Aby Warburg (1866–1929)* (Leuven: 2014).

3 Ellinger G., *Geschichte der Neulateinischen Literatur im sechzehnten Jahrhundert* (Berlin – Leipzig: 1929–1933); Grant L.W., *Neo-Latin Literature and the Pastoral* (Chapel Hill, NC: 1965); Stracke M., *Klassische Formen und neue Wirklichkeit. Die lateinische Ekloge des Humanismus*

Neo-Latin poetry. The earliest example is provided by the Tübingen scholar Heinrich Bebel (ca. 1472–1518) with the apologetical *Ecloga contra vituperatores poetarum* (1495). He was followed by the philologist Eobanus Hessus (1488–1540) in Erfurt with *Bucolicon* (1509, expanded in 1528)<sup>4</sup> and the Swiss Latinist Simon Lemnius (1511–1550) with *Bucolicorum aeglogae quinque* (1547–1550). Other authors in the Empire such as the classical philologist and editor Joachim Camerarius the Elder (1500–1574), the diplomat and Königsberg professor of rhetoric Georg Sabinus (1508–1560) or the poet Petrus Lotichius Secundus (1528–1560) also remained strictly faithful to the ancient models (*imitatio*), even if they did intersperse individual autobiographical references or relatively concrete opinions on contemporary controversies concerning education, poetics or confessionalism into their eclogues. The rare nymphs in these texts remain largely mute; they are merely passive figures, intensely desired but always unattainable objects of love. Irrespective, then, of the personal abilities of their contemporary authors, the purpose of these eclogues is to demonstrate proficiency in the competition with antiquity or within current scholarly networks (*aemulatio*).

In the course of the seventeenth century, however, a conspicuous shift takes place: specific local and temporal themes come to be explicitly introduced into the texts (focusing). Furthermore, a special technique of introducing non-poetic and non-ancient discourses is employed, such as law or confessionalism, which also serves to actualise the fictional content in a novel way (addition or implantation).

Ancient eclogues refer to “Arcadia” as a geographic region, but without an actual concrete location. Arcadia is an ideal landscape, both everywhere and nowhere. It has no special characteristics and no connection to the real world of sorrow and pain. As a “locus amoenus”, it provides an escape from the real world and functions as a means of consolation. Eclogues thus demonstrate the power of poetry to establish, via the imagination, an artificial reality where peace, tranquillity, and love reign.<sup>5</sup> They also offer guidance to the reader on

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(Gebrunn bei Würzburg: 1981); Mundt L., *Simon Lemnius. Bucolica. Fünf Eklogen* (Tübingen: 1996), esp. “Eklogengeschichte in Deutschland bis zur Mitte des 16. Jahrhunderts”, 15–52.

4 Müller G.M., “Poetische Standortsuche und Überbietungsanspruch – Strategien der Gattungskonstitution im ‘Bucolicon’ des Helius Eobanus Hessus zwischen intertextueller Anspielung und autobiographischer Inszenierung”, in Gleis R.F. – Seidel R. (eds.), *‘Parodia’ und Parodie. Aspekte interkulturellen Schreibens in der lateinischen Literatur der Frühen Neuzeit* (Tübingen: 2006) 111–170.

5 Berns J.J., “Inneres Theater: zu Imaginationstechnik und mnemonischer Topik in Antike und Früher Neuzeit”, in Berns J.J., *Die Jagd auf die Nymphe Echo: zur Technisierung der Wahrnehmung in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Bremen: 2011) 399–416.

how to handle a threatening reality. Of course these texts do not need a link to a real place, or even typical locality, in order to project the idea of a refuge. The natural elements described in these texts – forests, rivers, meadows, etc. – do not have any concrete indicative value. These ideal spaces are not geographically identifiable, but rather create the atmosphere of Elysian life.

It was the theorist of poetry and diplomat from Silesia, Martin Opitz (1597–1639), who initiated a widely observed new beginning with his *Nimfe Hercinie* (1630).<sup>6</sup> Opitz opens his *Nimfe Hercinie* with a distinctive violation of unwritten genre rules with a rather abrupt opening of his eclogue. He starts by pinpointing a precise location in the literal sense, almost as if he were a mathematical geometer. This location is so concrete that a reader could actually find it in the real world. The Silesian author uses a kind of coordinate system (place and time) in his description of a precise border, mountains with exact names and a semi-circular valley to define unambiguously where the story takes place and where the narrator (who hints at being identical with the author) finds himself in Silesia:

Es lieget dißeits dem Sudetischen gefilde/ welches Böhaimb von Schlesien  
trennet/ unter dem anmutigen Riesenberge ein thal/ deßen weitschweif-  
figer umbkreiß einem halben zirckel gleichet/ vndt mitt vielen hohen

6 Opitz Martin, *Die Schöfferey von der Nimfen Hercinie* (Brieg, August Gründer: 1630; reprint Bern: 1976). Opitz drew on sources from Romance-speaking Europe, e.g., Sannazaro or Montemayor. See Maché U., "Opitz 'Schöfferey von der Nimfen Hercinie' in Seventeenth-Century Literature", in Batts M.S. – Stankiewicz M.G. (eds.), *Essays on German Literature in Honour of G. Joyce Hallamore* (Toronto: 1968) 34–40; Forster L., "Martin Opitzens 'Schöfferey von der Nimfen Hercinie': eine nicht nur arkadische Pionierarbeit", in Brinkmann R. – Habersetzer K.H. – Raabe P. – Selig K.L. – Sphar B.L. (eds.), *Theatrum Europaeum, Festschrift für Maria Elida Szarota* (München: 1982) 241–251; Tschopp S.S., "Imitatio und renovatio: Martin Opitz' 'Schöfferey von der Nimfen Hercinie' als Modell der Aneignung literarischer Tradition", in Laufhütte H. (ed.), *Künste und Natur in Diskursen der Frühen Neuzeit* (Wiesbaden: 2000) 673–685; Tschopp S.S., "Die Grotte in Martin Opitz' 'Schöfferey von der Nimfen Hercinie' als Kreuzungspunkt bukolischer Diskurse", in Borgstedt T. – Schmitz W. (eds.), *Martin Opitz (1597–1639): Nachahmungspoetik und Lebenswelt* (Tübingen: 2002) 236–249; Krah H., "Autorschaft vor der Geburt des Autors: Martin Opitz' 'Schöfferey von der Nimfen Hercinie' (1630) als 'Autor-Poesis'", *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 80 (2006) 532–552; Fechner J.U., "Schlesische Provinz – literarischer Kosmopolitismus: Bad Warmbrunn und die 'Schöfferey von der Nimfen Hercinie' von Martin Opitz", in Adamski M. (ed.), *Schlesien als literarische Provinz. Literatur zwischen Regionalismus und Universalismus* (Leipzig: 2008) 11–23.



warten/ schönen bächen/ dörffern/ maierhöfen vnnndt schäffereyen erfüllt ist [...] Daselbst befandt ich mich.<sup>7</sup>

There is a valley at the foot of the graceful Giant Mountains on this side of the Sudete region, which separates Bohemian and Silesia, which in its vast reach resembles a semicircle, and which is filled with many high lookouts, beautiful streams, villages, estates and sheep farms. There I was.

'There I was' – here we encounter the narrator, an individual person in an individual place. Opitz also provides an exact date, 'zue ende des weinmonaths' ('at the end of wine month', i.e. October). The weather has already turned cool, the shepherds are already lighting fires, and the narrator even specifies the time of day, dawn. With these adjustments to the generic conventions regarding space and time, the text suggests a "here and now" rather than some distant ideal land and age. The fictional character of the text recedes into the background. However, Opitz' landscape also has Arcadian qualities: it is a 'wohnplatz aller freuden/ eine fröhliche einsamkeit/ ein Lusthauß der Nimfen und Feldtgötter/ ein meisterstücke der natur' ('a residence of abundant joy, a happy solitude, a house of pleasure for nymphs and rustic gods, a masterpiece of nature'). The eponymous Hercinie also points to a definite geographic denomination. The name refers to the Harz, the 'Hercinic woods', as Tacitus calls this elongated German low mountain range at whose eastern end the Silesian Giant Mountains rise.

In addition to the narrator, located at an actual time in an actual place, there are also some shepherds present, as well other actual people, who, significantly, do not carry Arcadian shepherds' names, but, on the contrary, contemporary surnames: Nüssler, Buchner and Venator. These are names of local luminaries, and Opitz demonstrates his real-world connections by placing them in this fictional world. They are the jurist Bernhard Wilhelm Nüssler (1597–1643), the classical philologist and literary theorist August Buchner (1591–1661), and the Neo-Latin satirist Balthasar Venator (1594–1664). These well-known scholars now "vouch" for him and his real existence, as it were, and are introduced into the fiction for this purpose. Opitz names them already in his dedicatory preface to the Silesian nobleman Hans Ulrich von Schaffgotsch (1595–1635), thereby rescuing them from anonymity and situating them within the sphere of influence of the princely house of Warmbrunn. Opitz also cites specific geographical names in the preface: the precise meeting place of the

7 Opitz, *Hercinie* 5. All translations are mine if not indicated otherwise.

poet and the nymph (to which I will turn below), which is also the location of the grottoes, is under the 'Flintzberg' mountain by the 'Bach des Zackens' stream,<sup>8</sup> not far from the healing springs of Warmbrunn. Thus a specific point in time, spatial coordinates (geographic designations, topographical names) and historical figures anchor the seemingly fictional events in reality in a variety of ways.

## 2 German Territorial Questions and Local Nymph Figures

Martin Opitz' deviation from the Arcadian tradition is more than just a one-time intervention. His *Hercinie* became a new prototype for the genre, which others in the Holy Roman Empire would soon start to imitate while selecting their own individual space and time for their narratives. These adaptations of the bucolic poem turn Arcadia into a concrete place, but also decentralise and multiply it. Each work takes certain liberties with its particularisation in world affairs, both in terms of author and region. Thus this adaptation of the bucolic genre amounted to a "decentralised" and thus "multiplied" "Arcadia" which at the same time was also rendered concrete. All these places are, of course, inhabited by nymphs: the free city of Nuremberg is home to the nymph Noris,<sup>9</sup> the 'Elmen-Nymffen' live in the Elm hills of Lower Saxony,<sup>10</sup> and the nymph Mycale lives at the Müggelsee lake in Brandenburg near Berlin.<sup>11</sup> All of these places are given poetic form and assigned political functions on the local level in entirely different ways.

Each nymph has her own educational or political function. The story of the loving nymph Amoena gives multiple indications of specific places through anagrams: she lives not far from Arcadia in 'Magernia' (Germania),

8 Opitz, *Hercinie* 5.

9 Hellwig Johann, *Die Nymphe Noris. In zwey Tageszeiten vorgestellt* (Nuremberg, Jeremias Dümmler: 1650; reprint Columbia, SC: 1994).

10 Gläser Enoch, *Der Elmen=Nymphen immer-grünendes Lust-Gebäu, nach art eines Schäffer-Gedichts* (Wolfenbüttel, Johann Bißmarck: 1650).

11 Bödiker Johann, *Nympe Mycale. Ein Poetisches und historisches Gespräche von dem Miggelberge, Von dessen Natur und der Spree und Seen umb Cöpenik Gelegenheit/ von den alten Einwohnern dieser Orten/ und sonst der Marck Brandenburg: Dabey Das alte und neue Stamm=Register Des Chur=Brandenburgischen und HochFürstl. Braunschweig=Lüneburgischen Hauses: Zu Ehren Der Gnädigsten Herrschaft/ Bey allgemeiner Freude eines Neugebornen Erb=Printzen/ In unterthänigster Glückwünschung vorgestellt* (Berlin, Christoff Runge [1685]).

in a province called 'Elisia' (Silesia).<sup>12</sup> This use of anagrams can also be found in the continuation of the *Pegnesisches Schäfergedicht* (1645), where the residence of field nymphs ('Wohnplatz der Feldnymfen') is located in the province 'Sesemin', an anagram for "Meißen".<sup>13</sup>

In this way, the seventeenth-century eclogue allows for recognizable local landscapes and places, in no small part in accordance with the political process of dividing the Holy Roman Empire into several territories. The idea of a universal Empire in the sense of *translatio imperii* was already beginning to fade in the fifteenth century as the medieval unity of Emperor and Pope became more and more abstract and theoretical after the Reformation. The increasing threat of the Turkish army as well as the military ambitions of the French king weakened the Empire as a central power. This forced princes to tend to the expansion and stability of their own power base, so that the sovereign as a political authority with the power to execute decisions functioned as the head of the state, and especially as the head of the Church. The medieval feudal system began to disappear in favour of the absolutist territorial state, a shift that took place in Germany within smaller units. Indeed, modern state-building in Germany took place at the territorial level, not at the national level. The 1555 Peace of Augsburg established a canonical foundation according to the principle of "cuius regio – eius religio", thus sanctioning particularistic self-determination. Territories with different confessions further distinguished themselves by setting up their own administration, education, and legislation. Moreover, they defended their borders by any means necessary, even military confrontation. Thus "Renaissance" as the reception of antiquity did not mean the same thing in each area of Europe. Due to the fragmentation of local interests, the functionalisation of genres also unfolded in specific and unique ways, depending on local politics. I will now take a brief look at some examples.

Early modern eclogues included discourses from other areas of knowledge outside of poetry. In the period after 1648, they responded implicitly to certain legal debates, diplomatic matters, and political philosophy. For example, one site-specific eclogue, which touches upon territorial affairs, "ratifies" the Peace of Westphalia, granting German territories relative autonomy. In other words, the poem shows how much the central power has become weakened. Eclogues no longer address the Emperor and the Empire, the way that Heinrich

12 A.S.D.D., *Jüngst erbawete Schäfferey/ Oder Keusche Liebes=Beschreibung Von der Verliebten Nymfen AMOENA Vnd dem Lobwürdigen Schäffer AMANDUS* (Leipzig, Tobias Rehfeld, Martin Richter: 1641).

13 Harsdörffer Georg Philipp – Birken Sigmund von – Klaj Johann, *Pegnesisches Schäfergedicht in den Beringorischen Gefilden* (Nuremberg, Wolfgang Endter: 1644) 5.

Bebel did in 1504 in celebration of the Emperor's victory over the Bohemians.<sup>14</sup> The legal expert and writer Bogislaw Philipp von Chemnitz (1605–1678) declared in a work dating from 1640 that a requirement for peace was the sovereignty of individual states without the supremacy of a single ruling family or dynasty.<sup>15</sup> In 1646, the polyhistor Hermann Conring (1606–1681) rejected the idea of a theologically justified empire and with it the notion of a universal Empire with its centre in Rome. Conring instead proposed a new concept based on the Germanic-German legal system, whose development stretched back for centuries and was thus equivalent to any other nation's centuries-old laws, he argued. Roman law thus remained foreign law and should only be permitted when it does not contradict traditional Germanic law. The territorial powers have the full authority to delegate and make independent decisions ("autocratia") concerning their own affairs. These legal arguments anticipate the influential theories that Pufendorff would put forward in 1667 and Leibniz in 1678: the philosopher, jurist and historian Samuel von Pufendorff (1632–1694) viewed the territorial princes as allies among themselves, not as subjects of the Emperor.<sup>16</sup> The Emperor, he argued, has no delegating authority when it comes to taxes, war decisions, or Church policy, matters that are only under his jurisdiction within his own power base. The polymath Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716) described different levels of political power in partnership, as in modern federalist systems.<sup>17</sup>

The poets not only allude to this legal discourse with its arguments and conclusions drawn both from legal positivism as well as from natural law theories. In their eclogues, they also connect it with knowledge, facts and opinions that are not of a legal nature. In their poetry, legitimised by the precepts of classical rhetoric, the authors make use of the imagination, and in particular the linguistic evocation of not actually existing entities (*evidentia*), often by means of rhetorical tropes and figures (*sermocinatio*, *prosopopoiia*, *fictio personae*) which contributed to influencing and persuading the audience.

14 Bebel Heinrich, "Egloga Triumphalis de victoria Caesaris Maximiliani contra Boiemos" [1504], in Freher Marquard (ed.), *Rerum Germanicorum scriptores varii* [...] (Strasbourg, Johann Reinhard Dulsecker: 1717) 511–517.

15 Chemnitz Bogislaw Philipp, *Dissertatio de ratione status in imperio nostro Romano-Germanico* (Freistadii [i.e. Amsterdam]: 1640).

16 Monzambano Severinus von [= Pufendorf Samuel], *De statu imperii Germanici ad Laelium fratrem* [...] (Euleutheropoli: 1667), cf. the German translation: *Die Verfassung des Deutschen Reiches*, trans. H. Denzer (Stuttgart: 1967).

17 Schneider H.P., "Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz", in Stolleis M. (ed.), *Staatsdenker im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert. Reichspublizistik, Politik, Naturrecht* (Frankfurt a.M.: 1977) 198–227, esp. 208.

### 3 Nymphs as Guardians of Secret Knowledge

In their eclogues, the poets imagined themselves as being dressed as shepherds and encountering mysterious female figures, who turn out to be nymphs, in natural settings. These nymphs lead them to unknown realms of hidden knowledge, to an immeasurable *arcanum*. In Opitz' *Hercinie*, a nymph suddenly appears and promises: 'So kompt/ jhr hirten/ schawet an/ was ich/ vndt kein mensch zeigen kan' ('Come, you shepherds, and behold what I, but no human, can show you'). Later on in the text she commands: 'Beschawet nun/ [...] das ort/ welches für mannes augen zwar sonst verschlossen ist' ('Now behold the place that is usually locked away from the eyes of man').<sup>18</sup> In Brandenburg grammarian and linguist Johann Bödiker's (1641–1695) *Nymphe Mycale* (1685), the nymph characterises herself like this: 'Ich bin kein Geist noch Wunder=Thier. Ich bin ein Stück der Gottes=Gaben / Die dieses Land und Gegend haben. Ich bin auch Gottes Creatur / Und bring Euch zu des Schöpfers Spur' ('I am neither ghost nor marvel. I am part of the gifts that God gave to this region. I am also God's creation, here to show you the vestige of the Creator').

The nymphs serve as intermediaries between God and nature on the one hand and the poet and humankind on the other. They reveal the way to hidden, divine knowledge and explain it to select humans. This takes place in special localities which humans would otherwise never find: grottoes, groves, temples, or even on small islands. These are repositories of knowledge, institutions of exchange, and sanctuaries of the divine. These places of devotion and inspiration also accomodate singing competitions and learned discussions. These songs and debates concern specific regional history, beginning with its colonisation in ancient times, followed by the history of the ruling dynasty and its genealogy. Geopolitical aspects, such as ethnic conflicts between Slavic and Germanic tribes, are mentioned as well. In the Franconian theologian Joachim Heinrich Hagen's (1648–1693) *Weihnacht=Schäferrey* (1669) the nymphs sing about the 'golden times of peace' in the peaceful period before the confessional confrontations in Franconia.<sup>19</sup> Culture, history, and economic power are described as stemming from the territory's material and immaterial wealth: from its physical mineral resources<sup>20</sup> as well as from institutional and social

18 Opitz, *Hercinie* 25–26.

19 Hagen Joachim Heinrich, *Weihnacht=Schäferrey. Zu Ehren der Heil=Geburt des Welt=Heilands Jesu Christi in rein-teutsche Reime verfasst Hirten-einfältig abgehandelt* (Bayreuth, Johann Gebhard: 1669; reprint Passau: 2013) 33.

20 In the system of the four elements, the nymphs represent water. Paracelsus also regards Melusine as a nymph: Paracelsus, *Liber de nymphis, sylphis, pygmaeis et salamandris et de*

resources such as state-owned educational institutions, repositories of knowledge (libraries, cabinets of curiosities) or communicative infrastructures (traffic routes, postal systems). All of these resources, possessions and thus also arguments lie hidden in the depths, but are represented in temples and burial chambers, caves and grottoes, pictures and sculptures. The nymph guides the shepherds and translates for them everything they see. She informs them of the territory's wealth, resources, and potential.

All of this knowledge, however, is actually intended to instruct the ruler in questions of statecraft, and the secret knowledge reaches him through the nymph and the poet. It falls to the latter to examine, secure and formulate the specific assets of a territory – resources that in a competitive situation work to the advantage of the ruler. Hagen lucidly presents the connection between nymph, poet, and sovereign: poetry itself is marked as a 'keusche Nympe',<sup>21</sup> a 'chaste nymph', who often appears at the court of a mighty regent, dressed as a shepherdess and worshipping God, from whom she derives her knowledge. Thus the acceptance of poetry in the princely state is part of a theological system: nymph, nature, poet and regent are each functional parts of a divine order. In this system, the sovereign is both the image and the 'Amts-Verwaltere' ('district official') of 'his heavenly majesty'.<sup>22</sup> The poetic service to the prince is to be carried out as artfully as if it were addressed to God himself, for the prince is the absolute ruler and the spiritual leader of the territory. The Helmstedt jurist and poet Enoch Gläser (1628–1668) outlines this relationship in his 1650 *Der Elmen=Nymphen immer-grünendes Lust-Gebäu* (*The Nymphs' of the Elm Evergreen Dwelling of Joy*) with the architectonic metaphor of the mighty prince as the pillar of the universal empire.<sup>23</sup>

Thus the precise responsibilities of the poet as well as of the regent are defined in the eclogue within the universal frame of reference of metaphysical and constitutional discourses. The figure of the nymph as a carrier of secrets and holder of extraordinary specialised knowledge spans the large scope between empirical, fact-based knowledge (actual history) and theological

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*caeteris spiritibus* (Basel: 1590; reprint, Marburg an der Lahn: 1996); see also: Jägerschmidt Johann Viktor, *Mineralische Wasser-Nympe, Das ist: Beschreibung von dem mineralischen Halt, Tugend, Krafft, und Würckung der Saurbrunnen, auch in was vor Zuständen selbige nützlich, oder gar nicht zu gebrauchen, und wie sich darinn zu verhalten, samt angefügter Diät, oder Lebens-Ordnung: Alles aus den wahren principis und experimentis physicis, und chymicis illustriert und untersucht* (Augsburg, David Zacharias: 1712).

21 Cf. Gläser, *Elmen=Nymphen* with "Nymphen-Ansprache" 23: a laudatory speech on German poetry and language.

22 Hagen, *Weihnacht=Schäferrey* 16.

23 Gläser, *Elmen=Nymphen* 51.

dogmatics (salvation history). Interestingly, this system of explanation and provision is also complemented by occult knowledge, raising the question of the connection to alchemy.

#### 4 Nymphs and Alchemical Processes

The frequent references to an *arcanum*, to *obscuritas*, to the incomprehensibility of perception, and the need for an initiated authority to interpret signs also point to the principles of alchemy as a key to revealing the mysteries of the world. As in alchemy, the eclogue features a figure chosen to apprehend the inner relationships of cosmogony and the functioning of the world. Whether as analogy or allegory, certain texts allude to nymphs in relation to alchemical processes. Rosemarie Zeller discusses a 'Nymphen-Jagd', a nymph hunt, in *Jäger-Lust. Philosophischer Nymphen=Fang* (*The Hunter's Pleasure. A Philosophical Capture of Nymphs*, 1635),<sup>24</sup> an alchemical work by the Silesian physician Thomas Rappolt.<sup>25</sup> The subject of the text is an ideal government, with the hunt showing how the prince obtains power by catching a fleeing nymph. It is prophesied that the nymph will bring him the key to wisdom ('Schlüssel zur Weisheit'). When he finally manages to catch her, the nymph, who was wrapped in a grey cloth, turns into gold, a symbol of the sun, which gives health, strength, and life. Through the nymph the prince is able to reach perfection: his court is cleansed of all evil and becomes a centre of righteous rule. This configuration also implies a parallel between the alchemical process and moral purification. Other alchemical parallels can be seen in the changing of the seasons described in the eclogues and the colours of the nymphs: yellow, blue, gold, and silver in Hellwig's *Nymphe Noris*, red in Hagen's *Weihnacht=Schäfferey*, and green in Bödiker's *Nymphe Mycale*. Of course, the eclogues also include words like love and desire, attraction and repulsion as well as references to changes of state and other physical transformations, which are meant to be deciphered as code. Elements, metals, colours, and materials act as ciphers of transformation with the goal of salvation. Hagen's

24 Rappolt Thomas, *Jäger=Lust. Philosophischer Nymphen=Fang/ Das ist: Gründliche und ausführliche Beschreibung des uhralten Steines der Weisen* [1635] (Hamburg, Georg Wulff: 1679).

25 Zeller R., "Hermetisches Sprechen in alchemischen Texten. Die *Jäger-Lust* von Thomas Rappolt", in Alt P.A. – Wels V. (eds.), *Konzepte des Hermetismus in der Literatur der Frühen Neuzeit* (Göttingen: 2010) 195–212.

nymph predicts: 'Es wird untergehen bald/ Feuer/ Wasser/ Lufft und Erden | Harre Seele! Gott-Gerechte // die Erlösung ist nicht weit'. (Fire, water, air and earth will perish soon, but persist, soul, justified before God! Salvation is not far away').<sup>26</sup>

In Bödiker's work, the grotto as a place deep in the mountain, as a hoard of secrets in the dark, is also connected to real mineral resources and mining. As a poet and historian of language, however, he transfers the notion of riches buried in the ground to language as a repository of knowledge: it is a matter here of digging deeply into language in order to elicit secrets. Unknown meanings and mental connections can be extracted, for example, by breaking down or recombining the elements of language or correlating its components by detecting analogies – a kind of alchemy of language based on the application of metaphorology and etymology. Understanding is not self-evident, there is a need for the philological art of interpretation, identifying connections, conveying and translating. In addition to shepherds, nymphs, and other divine figures, Enoch Gläser's eclogue also features a very prominent agent of mediation with Hermes himself as the namesake and allegorical representation of hermeneutics.<sup>27</sup> The nymphs in the poem remain invisible and must be "translated", i.e., conveyed, by Mercury (Hermes). Mercury guides the shepherds to a place they would never reach alone where the 'keuschen Waldnymphen', the 'chaste forest nymphs', 'who have arranged a feast in honour of the God of the years, the mighty Janus' ('[dem] Gott der Jahre/ dem mächtigen Janus ein Ehren=Fest angestellet [haben]')<sup>28</sup> reside and whose chastity shall not be violated. It is forbidden to even look directly at them. Instead, Mercury leads the shepherds to a building made of seven holy oaks. Each stands for one of the seven nymphs and their works, and here the shepherds may look at them in the form of paintings and emblems.

The poet thus performs his very special ability to make visible things which normally cannot be seen. He is able to give life to things which are normally inanimate, and, in contrast to the deceiving and therefore exiled poet of Plato's *Republic*, he does so without lying. Nor does a poet like Bödiker have a problem

26 Hagen, *Weihnacht=Schäfferey* 38.

27 The Strasbourg professor of rhetoric Johann Conrad Dannhauer (1603–1666) was probably the first to use the term "ars hermeneutica" in the 1620s, see in particular his *Hermeneutica Sacra sive methodus exponendarum sacrarum literarum* (Strasbourg, Stadelius: 1654). Admittedly he limited the term to the exegesis of Scripture.

28 Gläser, *Elmen=Nymphen* 36.



etymologically connecting “Hermes” with “Hermann”, thereby linking the history of the German lands with ancient Egyptian Hermeticism.<sup>29</sup>

The frequent discovery in the eclogues of stone tablets (‘schwartzte steinerne platten’<sup>30</sup>) engraved with mysterious writing can also be seen as a reference to the Hermetic tradition. The wisdom that was lost after the great flood can be found on these tablets or columns, which, however, require competent interpretation that can only be performed by scholars guided by mediating figures. Nature also holds secrets and speaks in texts, for example, via inscriptions in trees, while natural elements, such as a reflecting pool, function as symbols. But not all signs can be seen or read. Some eclogues depict the perception of nature as a listening experience with songs sung by invisible singers. Sensual objects and spiritual experience coincide for the shepherds; their interpretation is then performed emblematically. It is common practice for the shepherds to use echo to generate knowledge. Hagen for example praises ‘[d]es Wortes Nachwort’, the ‘word following the word’: the response is already contained in the verbal form of the call. The call itself mystically reveals the answer.<sup>31</sup> The premise of this exegetic experience is that nature is formed and perfused by the divine logos, which courses throughout all of existence. Nature’s meaning can therefore be deciphered. But only the poet in nature can perform this decoding this with the help of a nymph or of Mercury. Sense perception, spiritual experience and combinatorial expertise have to come together. The prince, however, is not capable of this task. But since answers to questions of political history and practical everyday diplomacy can be discovered in nature as the embodiment of divine order, the prince needs the poet if he wants to rule in harmony with the order of salvation.

## 5 Nymphs and Christianity: Angels and Pagan Forms

With their inclusion of occult science, Hermeticism and nature mysticism, the eclogues signal grave danger: heathen systems of thought, in particular philosophy as an explanation of the world, could become so fascinating, convincing and conclusive that the Christian message could lose its importance.

29 Alt P.A., *Imaginäres Geheimwissen. Untersuchungen zum Hermetismus in literarischen Texten der Frühen Neuzeit* (Göttingen: 2012), esp.: „Spiritualität und Gesellschaftsstruktur. Hermetismus in der Bukolik (Opitz, Harsdörffer, Klaj, Birken)“, 149–180.

30 Opitz, *Hercinie* 31.

31 Particular times of day, such as dawn, or seasons, such as springtime, were held to lend themselves in a special way to this type of inspiration.

Eclogues clearly allow for a particularly striking intrusion of the *Nachleben* of antiquity into Christian modernity. It is for this reason that all of the authors of the texts discussed here repeatedly emphasise their unquestionable orthodoxy, regardless of all of their systematic and illustrative references to antiquity. This is more than just a topos. The knowledge transfer from the nymph to the shepherd-poet and then on to the regent is resolutely anchored in the framework of salvation history and thereby in normative Christianity. Thus the shepherd, for example, is given a Scripture-based depth that clearly seeks connection with Lutheran orthodoxy. The poet is not only a gifted exegete, but rather, as shepherd, acquires the role of a cipher whose equivalent is found in the salvific texts.

Shepherds in Holy Scripture all spread knowledge about justice on earth and heavenly peace. Hagen argues that the Church has always been in the fields, tending to the worship of heaven in pious innocence together with the poet and the flute, which represents the nymph. From David to the evangelists, shepherds are ever-present, receiving the word of God from the angels and bringing it to the flocks – and all of them, finally, follow the highest mediator between God and man (*imitatio*): Jesus Christ too saw himself as a shepherd.

In his dedication to Markgraf Christian Ernst zu Brandenburg and Heinrich von Reussen, Hagen explains: since the golden age of Adam all that has ever happened has become visible in the ‘divine book of history’ (*‘göttliche Geschicht-Buch’*). The pagans already knew this, but they could only make out the writing by squinting through the ‘telescope of old historical tales’ (*‘Fernglas alter Geschicht-Erzehlungen’*). The reference here is to the shepherds’ long existence from the beginning of time to the present. Since Adam and his naming of the contents of God’s creation, every poet-shepherd in his succession has also been a reader, mediator and interpreter of world events. His source are nature’s revelations, possibly in reminiscence of the paradise that was lost. In the city or in civilisation, on the contrary, Hagen tells the prince in his preface, idolatry (*‘Abgötterei’*) reigns as a false faith. He thus opposes simpleminded *‘Glaubens=Hoheit’* (‘the authority of faith’) and *‘Vernunft=Nichtigkeit’* (‘inanity of reason’), chastising the *‘Klängel=Geist’* (‘sharp witted spirit’) and the *‘Sinnen=Meister’* (‘master of wit’) as ‘excessive cleverness is of no use here: simplemindedness is faith’s ornament’ (*‘kein Überwitz nützet hier: Die Einfalt ist des Glaubens=Zier’*).<sup>32</sup> Strong faith is more than reason: ‘a pure heart is Christ’s cradle’ (*‘ein reines Herz ist Christus Wiege’*), and poetry and theology converge ‘on all the pleasurable and sacred paths of sheep’ (*‘in alle Lust=heilige*

32 Hagen, *Weihnacht=Schäfferey* 27.

Schaf-Trifte').<sup>33</sup> The values of simplicity and innocence signal clearly that the layman stands in opposition here to orthodoxy, while the poet seems destined by his acts to be a theologian. The godly and devout nymph Eusebia is always by the poet's side and, as Hagen shows, together they mediate between reason and faith. She announces herself as a bodiless echo, and 'the shepherd stood confused' ('[d]er Schäfer stund verwirrt'), running around asking, 'Wer bist der mich grüßt?' ('Who greets me?'). The question's final combination of syllables already contains the answer: 'Jch Christ', of course echoing the Franconian pronunciation ('mich gießt'). With God speaking through nature, Christ thus answers himself, and the shepherd recognizes God's grace; God provides him with answers. When the faithful shepherd hears singing, he follows the voice,

biß er nach wenig Gehen Dort eine Nymfe sah in dem gebüsch ste-  
hen/ Nächst einem Eichen=Baum Jr Rock war Feuerroth/ geflügelt das  
Gewand; wie eine Flamme loht Und loddert Himmel-an/ so war das Haar  
getrieben Berg-an von einem Wind/ Gold=Gülden stund geschrieben Der  
theure JESUS Nam auf der entblöste Brust.<sup>34</sup>

after having taken some steps, he saw a nymph standing in the bushes near an oak-tree, her skirt was red like fire, her dress had wings, blazing like a flame towards the sky, her hair blowing in the wind, in golden letters the precious name of JESUS was written on her bare chest.

The nymph does not see the shepherd and sings of her love of God, for she is Eusebia, the personification of devoutness and godliness, as Hagen shows.<sup>35</sup> Hagen refers to the Pegnitz Society founder Georg Philipp Harsdörffer (1607–1658), who has godliness (Eusebia) appear in his *Frauenzimmer-Gesprächsspiele* (*Women's Conversation Games*, 1655/56), as did the society's *praeses*, Sigmund von Birken (1626–1681), in his *Kriegs- und Friedensbildung* (1649),<sup>36</sup> a work about the peace following the Thirty Years' War. The

33 Ibidem 15.

34 Ibidem 16.

35 See Hänselmann M.C., "Gottessuche als Weg zur Selbstfindung. Die 'Weihnacht=Schäfferey' von Joachim Heinrich Hagen", in Hänselmann M.C. – Schuster R. (eds.), *Das Motiv der Weihnacht. Untersuchungen zur religiösen Dichtung aus dem Umfeld des Pegnesischen Blumenordens im 17. Jahrhundert* (Passau: 2013) 183–230.

36 Birken Sigmund von, *Krieges= und Friedensbildung, in einer Bey hochansehnlicher Volkreicher Versammlung/ öffentlich vorgetragenen Rede/ aufgestellt/ Nebenst einer Schäfferey* (Nuremberg, Wolfgang Endter: 1649).

Nuremberg Lutheran theologian Jacob Hieronymus Lochner (1649–1700) published *Weihnachts=Gedicht der Hoch=Heiligen Christ=Geburt zu Ehren* (1671);<sup>37</sup> the councilman Michael Kongehl in Königsberg (1646–1710) wrote a Christmas eclogue entitled *Neugebohrner Lebens=Fürst JESUS/ Oder Geistliche Schäfferey Auff die Geburt Christi* (1675/1683), both of them also depicting godly and devout nymphs.<sup>38</sup>

We must be clear here that while these authors are anchored in the foundations of Protestant doctrine, they clearly depart from the narrow scope of Luther's theology of the Word of God in that they at least go as far as supplementing revelation in Scripture by revelation in nature. Spiritualism, the finding and forming of words by the poets in an exceptional state, supersedes the academic exegesis of the divinely given text. A contemporary poet's experience of inspiration, his individual art of expression and linguistic abilities, thus take the place of the biblical text and its theological interpretation.

An inconspicuous detail in almost all eclogues proves to be very telling: whenever and wherever nymphs appear, the shepherds usually react in the same way. In Opitz' poem, they are startled and decide to flee ('verwundert und bestürzt [...] auß schrecken zuerük gelauffen').<sup>39</sup> Bödiker uses similar turns of phrase in his description of the frightened shepherd-poets ('[es] erschrecken die wackeren Poeten [...] plötzlich, denn vor ihnen erscheint eine Nymphe').<sup>40</sup> In Gläser's work, 'shock' and great 'surprise' are combined in a series of emotional responses to the encounter with the nymphs [?]: the shepherds first pause for a moment ('innehalten'), then they are horrified ('entsetzen'), amazed ('verwundern'), and astonished ('erstaunen'); but they are also inflamed ('entzündet') by the encounter.<sup>41</sup> In Hagen's *Weihnacht=Schäfferey*, the shepherd is 'confused' and so overwhelmed that he can no longer walk ('war so übermannt von Geist=entbrannten Sinnen/ Daß sein Beginnen auch

37 Lochner Jacob Hieronymus, *Weihnacht=Gedicht der Hoch=Heiligen Christ=Geburt zu Ehren* (Altdorf, Meyer: 1671).

38 In Michael Kongehl's eclogues, the author walks and prays with Eusebia in Königsberg, see Keller A., *Michael Kongehl (1646–1710). 'Durchwandert ihn/ gewiß! ihr werdet anders werden [...].'* *Transitorische Textkonstitution und persuasive Adressatenlenkung auf der Basis rhetorischer Geneseprinzipien im Gesamtwerk des Pegnitzschäfers in Preußen* (Berlin: 2004) 411–506.

39 Opitz, *Hercinie* 25.

40 Bödiker, *Mycale* 13.

41 Gläser, *Elmen=Nymphen* 32.

kunt keinen Schritt gewinnen').<sup>42</sup> Hellwig describes the nymphs as themselves being ecstatic ('verzucket') and transfixed ('erstarret').<sup>43</sup>

The Christmas shepherds are also frightened when the angel appears, as mirrored in his call to 'have no fear' (Luke 2:10). There is a special discussion of 'schrack' (fright) in the Silesian mystic Jacob Boehme's *Aurora*:<sup>44</sup> he describes it as the experience of a 'flash of terror', as a 'shock of self-recognition',<sup>45</sup> as the 'wisdom of Sophia' coming by 'the fire flash of fright'.<sup>46</sup> Boehme characterises this shock as the elemental force of a sudden realisation – the moment when something unforeseen suddenly enters a person's horizon of perception. This poetic occurrence is in reality an experience of inspiration or revelation, a sudden initiation (*raptus*) into secret knowledge. Its power and importance signal the value and extent of the special knowledge the shepherd receives from the nymph. In Hagen's eclogue, the nymph Eusebia who suddenly appears to the shepherd Filadon, stands for the fear of God suddenly overwhelming the poet. He recognizes God in nature and is consumed by an unprecedented, powerful love.

This provides another safeguard in the framework of Christian theology. These representations of the inspiring nymph and the frightened shepherd-poet, who, however, is soon writing everything down, raise further questions about the origins of their relationship and whether they are not actually substitutions for another configuration: that between the angel and the Evangelist, as portrayed in paintings by Caravaggio, Guido Reni, Rembrandt, and others. In this respect, the nymph could be understood as a "pathos formula" that replaces the Christian model of authentication and authorisation (i.e., the angel as the voice or emissary of God) with a pagan figuration without violating the Christian content. This would make the nymph the pagan version of the mediating angel and the shepherd the receiving evangelist.<sup>47</sup> Sigmund von Birken

42 Hagen, *Weihnacht=Schäpferey* 16.

43 Hellwig, *Noris* 27, 28.

44 Cf. Jacob Böhme in his *Aurora* (1612), ch. xv, in Böhme Jacob, *Werke*, ed. F. van Ingen (Frankfurt a.M.: 1987) 267–283.

45 Cf. Weeks A., *Boehme. An Intellectual Biography of the Seventeenth Century. Philosopher and Mystic* (Albany, NY: 1991) 177.

46 Cf. Jacob Böhme in his *De signatura rerum*, in Böhme, *Werke* 507–591, esp. 608. For further information, see: Kühlmann W., "Vernunftdiktatur und Sprachdiktatur: Jacob Böhme bei Gottsched und Adelung", in Kühlmann W. – Vollhardt F., *Offenbarung und Episteme. Zur europäischen Wirkung Jacob Böhmes* (Berlin – Boston, MA: 2012) 579–604, esp. 592.

47 Some eclogues discuss the problem of paganisation and allegorisation. Georg Philipp Harsdörffer does not want to see any pagan idols ('heidnische Götterbilder') in the eclogue, like the Italian poets do. But he respects arcane dimensions, 'verborgene Dinge',

articulates this in his dedication to Hagen, writing that the author 'already mingles with angels on earth' ('menge sich ja schon auf Erden unter Engel').<sup>48</sup>

There is an interesting case of revision that must be mentioned in the context of the confrontation between Christian and pagan elements in the eclogue in relation to the role of the nymph: in Christian mourning poetry, the nymph as a female guide leads the disoriented male protagonist through a landscape full of knowledge, allowing him to gain that knowledge and to experience comfort and elevation. In the year 1670, Sigmund von Birken wrote a *Trauer=Hirten=Spiel* (*Shepherd's Tragedy*), dedicated to his deceased wife Margaris.<sup>49</sup> The play follows the pattern of the eclogue.<sup>50</sup> The text opens with a lone shepherd, the saddened Floridan, representing the author, walking in the landscape of the Pegnitz valley on a lovely day in spring. He deplores the disparity between his personal mood and the natural scenery. His deep mourning is the opposite of the hopeful growing of plants and the cheerful singing of the birds in the sky.

Without noticing, the shepherd is carried through the landscape by an unseen force. This unwittingly guided stroll reveals new knowledge to him. For example, when he suddenly hears a field lark, he recalls his Margaris with joy because she is now an 'angel-lark' ('Engels-Lerche') in heaven. The path leads the shepherd ever onward through a course of shifting moods and finally brings him to solace as he becomes filled with the certainty of eternal blessedness along the way. In addition to acoustic and visual experiences (echoes, mirror images), sculptures and inscriptions on buildings instruct and elevate him. A chapel "talks" to him: 'Me vide in fide/ MICH SCHAUE UND TRAUE' ('see me and trust me'). The phrase plunges 'in die Augen/ und zugleich ins Herz' ('into the eyes and immediately into the heart'). Finally, the parable of the grain of wheat teaches him about the promise of the resurrection. The parable and the season of spring coincide as a divine revelation. Like the primroses ('Schlüsselblumen') that awake from frozen numbness to new life, so too will his wife, he himself, and the whole of humanity.

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in bucolic literature. See Harsdörffer Georg Philipp, *Poetischer Trichter [...]*, vol. 2 (Nuremberg, Wolfgang Endter: 1647–53) 101–103; cf. Birken Sigmund von, *Teutsche Redebind und Dicht-Kunst* (Nuremberg, Wolfgang Endter: 1679; reprint Hildesheim: 1973) 300.

48 Hagen, *Weihnacht=Schäfferey* 4.

49 Birken Sigmund von, *Floridans Lieb- und Lob-Andenken seiner seelig-entseelten Margaris im Pegnitz-Gefilde bei fröhlicher Frühlingszeit traurig angestimmt* ([s.l.]: [1670]).

50 Keller A., "Spaziergang und Lektüre. Analogien zwischen fiktionaler Bewegung und faktischem Rezeptionsverhalten als hermeneutische Hilfestellung für Textkonzeptionen des 17. Jahrhunderts", in Laufhütte H. (ed.), *Künste und Natur. Referate der Wolfenbütteler Barock-Tagung 1997* (Wiesbaden: 2000) 951–967.

After the poet completes his educational walk, the previously misunderstood cosmos of 'nature' takes on new meaning for him in terms of salvation history. As with the walks guided by nymphs in bodily form, here an invisible nymph has led the protagonist along a path toward joy and knowledge and away from disorientation and misery. Once again the protagonist is the poet-author. Because he alone is able to have this experience, he is then the only one who can later explain it to the readers in his poem. In von Birken's text, the pagan figure of the nymph is merely replaced by the deceased wife of the shepherd, who only appears in his mind. The pattern and the effect are the same. The major difference is the change in Christian connotations, especially with spiritual solace at the journey's end. Still, en route the poet passes through the familiar stages of shock, instruction, conviction, and assurance, from one conviction (that of the meaninglessness of existence) to its opposite (meaningful existence).

Seventeenth-century nymphs are thus multivalent figures who embody facets of a magical, extrasensory, and even metaphysical femininity.<sup>51</sup> An aspect that remains to be explored in depth is their precise relation with muses, natural spirits,<sup>52</sup> and angels, but also to the souls of the deceased. On the other end of the spectrum, however, there is their concrete corporeality with its erotic connotations as a direct inheritance from antiquity, where nymphs invariably stood for hopelessly desired femininity. Thus in *Fortsetzung der Pegnitz-Schäferrey* (1645), the shepherds are shown erotic paintings or sculptures with individual nymphs portrayed very naturalistically and dancing to Pan's flute in a carnal way. In Warburg's words, then, an eruption of 'unbridled pagan exuberance,'<sup>53</sup> which, however, is always contained by a clear profession of orthodoxy. This manoeuvring room between Christian doctrine and pagan projection surfaces in numerous eclogues would be a fruitful topic for further research.

51 This is closely related to notions of the feminine in spiritualism, cf. Gaute K. – Pechmann A. von, *Magie, Matriarchat und Marienkult. Frauen und Religion. Versuch einer Bestandsaufnahme* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: 1989).

52 The connections between nymphs and natural spirits are numerous. Cf. Dinzelbacher P., "Der Liber de nymphis, sylphis, pygmaeis et salamandris", in Classen A. (ed.), *Paracelsus im Kontext der Wissenschaften seiner Zeit. Kultur- und mentalitätsgeschichtliche Annäherungen* (Berlin – New York: 2010) 21–46.

53 Warburg A., *The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity: Contributions to the Cultural History of the European Renaissance*, trans. David Britt (Los Angeles, CA: 1999) 245.

## 6 Conclusion: The Poet Inspired by a Nymph as Advisor to the Ruler

Nymphs thus serve as complex messenger figures, enabling the transfer between animated nature, that is, the divine knowledge available there, and institutionalised learning, which is at the service of the territorial lords. Only the poets are able to meet the nymphs and then transform their messages into skilful and memorable verses. The authors of the eclogues in which nymphs figure distinguish themselves as unique individual thinkers, masters of articulation, and, finally, judges of the historic actions occurring in the precisely located Arcadian settings. Alongside the textual present and the narrated past, there also lies the foretold future in the form of prophecy, prognosis, and advice.

From the perspective of social history, we recognize the poets' attempts to appoint themselves as relevant political counsellors in the young territorial states, but also their assertion of lay competence in the realm of spiritual welfare. This, however, remains grounded in theology, from interpretations of salvation history to the practice of pastoral care in cases of bereavement and religious doubt. Initiation, revelation, and *translatio sapientiae* support the poetological argument that praises the imagination as a key human faculty,<sup>54</sup> capable of supplying strong evidence for how astral forces affect the human body. The ability to not only experience these forces as a fright but also to verbally grasp them in a controlled way means that the uninitiated also benefit from the revelations.<sup>55</sup> The cosmos can impact on the individual body and mind with the help of the poetic text and the imagination. In addition to factual description, metaphorical translation and lyrical transfiguration, it is also the principle of conversation that stimulates the imagination. Discourse and dialectic, contest and scholarly discussion contribute to a grasp of the object in an instructive and skilful way.

With these various discursive agents, each eclogue imparts a special territorial standpoint, thus strengthening the autonomy of the region with

54 Schmidt-Biggemann W., "Translatio sapientiae", *Dialektik. Enzyklopädische Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Wissenschaften* 1 (1998) 42–72.

55 Gläser, *Elmen=Nymphen* 113: 'Es kann ein Poet in seinen Gedichten alles vorbilden/ was gleich in der Natur an sich selber niehmals zu finden ist/ oder gefunden worden. Weil ihm niehmals Worte ermangeln/ dadurch er als mit Farben so wol sein Gedichte/ als die Sachen/ davon er schreibet/ belebt machen kan.' On the early modern poets' views of their own role, see: Häfner R., *Götter im Exil. Frühneuzeitliches Dichtungsverständnis im Spannungsfeld christlicher Apologetik und philologischer Kritik* (ca. 1590–1736) (Tübingen: 2003).



poetic means.<sup>56</sup> There is a line connecting the genre of “*laus urbis*” and founding legends with humanist historiography. All of these texts focus on special areas or cities in Italy as well as in other European countries.<sup>57</sup> The eclogue, however, and its key figure, the local nymph, tries to present these factual aspects in a more emphatic way by establishing a spiritual level as a strategy of authentication. Knowledge resides in accessible creation and only requires skilled facilitation. A pagan technique of poetry, however, is required to show this.

The authors want their respective territory to acknowledge its uniqueness as a distinct entity. They want it to be emancipated politically under its own historical conditions. The territory has to be a fixed focal point from which it can then be measured as part of a cosmology that includes other regions and structures. This singular position replaces the spatial relations that dominated under the Holy Roman Empire’s universality: here, there is no universal validity, no universal liability. As the production of different eclogues in different areas shows, individual political protagonists come to power and then join with other individual power centres or oppose them. The disintegration of power that posed a threat to the Empire becomes an opportunity not only for the territories, but for the Empire as well.

The eclogue for Nuremberg for example gives a clear vote for strong lay piety instead of rigid academic orthodoxy. It also calls for an autonomous free city with its praise for local families, the mighty city patriarchate, crafts, and international trade, in particular with Italy. This praise also includes active resistance to the emperor. The glorification of the “*Freie Reichsstadt*” rejects all forms of heteronomy.<sup>58</sup> The sequel to the poem *Pegnitz-Schäfercy* (1645)

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56 Cf. the same phenomena in the early modern appropriations of the Greek novel: Keller A., “Transformation statt Translation: Plurale Heliodor-Imitatio am Beispiel von Exordialtopik im deutschsprachigen Roman des 17. Jahrhunderts”, in Seeber S. – Rivoletti C. – Lupp V. (eds.), *Heliodorus redivivus. Vernetzung und interkultureller Kontext in der europäischen ‘Aithiopica’-Rezeption der Frühen Neuzeit* (Berlin – New York: 2018, forthcoming).

57 Moeglin J.M., “Dynastisches Bewußtsein und Geschichtsschreibung. Zum Selbstverständnis der Wittelsbacher, Habsburger und Hohenzollern im Spätmittelalter”, *Historische Zeitschrift* 256 (1993) 631–635; Münkler H. – Grünberger H. – Meyer K., *Nationenbildung. Die Nationalisierung Europas im Diskurs humanistischer Intellektueller. Italien und Deutschland* (Berlin: 1998); Brendle F. – Mertens D. – Schindling A. – Ziegler W. (eds.), *Deutsche Landesgeschichtsschreibung im Zeichen des Humanismus* (Stuttgart: 2001); Helmrich J. – Schirrmeister A. – Schlelein S. (eds.), *Historiographie des Humanismus. Literarische Verfahren, soziale Praxis, geschichtliche Räume* (Berlin – Boston, MA: 2013).

58 Cf. Garber K., “Stadt und Literatur im alten deutschen Sprachraum Umriss der Forschung. Regionale Literaturgeschichte und kommunale Ikonologie. Nürnberg als

includes a nymph who tells the shepherds about the current war with allusions to Wallenstein's death to help illustrate the heroic tales of the past. In the region of Franconia, the nymph appears as a representative of historical positioning as early as the sixteenth century in Joachim Camerarius the Elder's fourth eclogue, *Lycidas* (Strasburg 1540, Leipzig 1585). In the poem, Aegle, the nymph of the Main River, allegorically stands for the inhabitants of Bamberg during the Peasants' Rebellion of 1525 and the subsequent Reformation conflicts. Her lover is the shepherd Moeris, representing the real-life Hieronymus Cammermeister, who was arrested on suspicion of colluding with the rebels. The nymph advises him in his role of model for generations to come and encourages him with her words.<sup>59</sup> Still, the staunch regional patriotism that would reach its pinnacle some 120 years later is still quite underdeveloped here.

An eclogue set in Silesia, by contrast, depicts the region as subject to the conflict between local Protestantism and the Habsburg rulers in Vienna who want to recatholicise the country. In 1630, Martin Opitz praises the now Protestant House of Schaffgotsch in a poem featuring a nymph who speaks extensively and enthusiastically on local history in order to encourage the regional powers. An eclogue set in Lower Saxony shows that Braunschweig-Hannover's greatest asset is its reform university where well-known irenic scholars teach. The Academia Julia founded by Duke Julius in 1576 in Helmstedt was home to the works of Hermann Conring, Calixt, and Giordano Bruno (1589/90). Christian syncretism, the Copernican worldview, and public law shaped the discourse there, while the old Duke of Saxony, Wedekind, appears in the poem testifying in support of the battle against paganism, which ought to be read here as an expression of rigid orthodoxy.<sup>60</sup> With great hopes, Enoch Gläser dedicated his eclogue to Rudolf August, Duke of Braunschweig-Lüneburg (1627–1704). The reference to the Elm, the hills just south-east of Braunschweig, evokes the region of Helmstedt, Braunschweig, and Lüneburg. Education is portrayed as a duty; learned men and men of power must work together to achieve more. Praise for Harsdörffer and the eloquent Pegnitz shepherds as well as for the grammarians Justus Georg Schottelius und August Buchner is connected with a warning against the "poisoning" of the German language by other peoples. Gläser's *Triumphirender Elm* (1649), an encomium celebrating Helmstedt University that was published a year before the *Elmen=Nymphen*, belongs in

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Paradigma", in Garber K. (ed.), *Stadt und Literatur im deutschen Sprachraum der Frühen Neuzeit* (Tübingen: 1998) 3–89, esp. 50–60; Reinhart M., "The Privileging of the Poet in Johann Hellwig's Prose Eclogue 'Die Nympe Noris'", *Daphnis* 17 (1988) 647–661.

59 Cf. Mundt, *Simon Lemnius Bucolica* 32–35.

60 Gläser, *Elmen=Nymphen* 65.

this context as well. Finally, Bödiker's eclogue for Berlin lends strength to the Elector of Brandenburg on the eve of his son being crowned king in Prussia (1701). It portrays him as a member of an old and venerable line and as the just ruler over both Germanic and Slavic peoples.<sup>61</sup>

These brief examples provide a mere hint of the real history of the respective territories, some of which were on the threshold of fundamental changes. A comparative and detailed study of these texts thus seems highly worthwhile. With the renaissance of an ancient genre like the eclogue, the attempts of intellectuals to take part in the development of these territories and to gain some control in certain decision-making centres where European politics were being determined become clear. It was nymphs whom they chose as their most powerful intermediaries.

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61 See Keller A., "Nympe und Schäfer in Grotte und Bibliothek: Die epistemische Allianz aus Natur und Geist am Beispiel Johann Bödikers 'Nympe Mycale' (1685)", in Delabar W. – Meise H., *Liebe als Metapher. Eine Studie in elf Teilen* (Frankfurt a.M.: 2013) 77–103.

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## Discursive Sisters of the Arts, Raw Material of Inspiration: The Early Pegnitz Flower Society's Nymphs

*Damaris Leimgruber*

Nymphs are ubiquitous figures in seventeenth-century German pastoral genres. Be it in pastoral plays, operas, prosimetric eclogues, or shorter occasional poetry, nymphs often appear in groups as a general index of the bucolic, as companions of key figures and chorus-like commentators. They also appear as individuals representing various characters such as advisers, guides or providers of information on nature and landscapes. In religious genres or religiously based aesthetics, however, the appearance of nymphs is a rather strange phenomenon, at least until the 1640s. It is this latter type of nymphs that is the subject of this paper.

In 1644, twenty-seven years after the foundation of the Fruitbearing Society (*atio*), a small circle of jurists, poets, and theologians in Nuremberg formed a local literary society called the Pegnitzschäfer or Pegnitz Flower Society. Following mainly the same purposes of the larger, nationally operating Fruitbearing Society, the Pegnitz Flower Society nevertheless pursued its own, highly individual aesthetic and social interests.<sup>1</sup> Besides their specific social orientation and their experimental musical language linked to the justification of German as a preeminent and meaningful language of literature in its own right, the most distinctive focus of the group centred on their firm Christian orientation. This focus especially caused difficulties concerning the adaptation of European pastoral poetry, notably in the context of the reception of antiquity, which raised particular difficulties in regard to subject matter. Therefore, the alignment to Renaissance and ancient subjects underwent its own process with an entirely individual focus, which arose paradigmatically in the society's dealings with nymphs.

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1 For a representative overview, see e.g. Paas J.R. (ed.), *Der Franken Rom. Nürnbergs Blütezeit in der zweiten Hälfte des 17. Jahrhunderts. Beiträge eines internationalen Kongresses aus Anlass des 350 jährigen Bestehens des Pegnesischen Blumenordens*, 23.–26. August 1994 in Nürnberg (Wiesbaden: 1995).



This article focuses on the first principal works of the Pegnitz Flower Society of 1644–1645: Georg Philipp Harsdörffer's *Frauenzimmer Gesprächspiele*, the *Pegnesisches Schaefergedicht*, jointly written by Harsdörffer, Johann Klaj, and Sigmund von Birken, and its sequel, *Fortsetzung Der Pegnitz-Schäferey*.<sup>2</sup> In the following, Harsdörffer's religious conversational game or rather musical play *Seelewig* will take centre stage.<sup>3</sup> A short overview of its material and sources is given below [Fig. 9.1]: *Seelewig* first appeared in 1644 in Part 4 of Harsdörffer's *Frauenzimmer Gesprächspiele*, a collection of conversational games. The game relevant to the present discussion contains a libretto of the play *Ein Geistliches Waldgedicht*. *Seelewig* accompanied by the usual intermittent comments typical of conversational games of the time as well as a musical score in the appendix. The libretto (without commentaries and musical score) was printed in 1654 for a performance at Wolfenbüttel. *Seelewig* originally derives from Niccolò Negri's *Favola boscareccia et spirituale: L'Anima Felice* (1609), translated into German in 1637.<sup>4</sup> However, Harsdörffer's revision goes far beyond his

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- 2 [Harsdörffer Georg Philipp – Klaj Johann – Birken Sigmund von], *Pegnesisches Schaefergedicht* and *Fortsetzung Der Pegnitz-Schäferey*, ed. K. Garber, Deutsche Neudrucke. Reihe Barock 8 (Nuremberg, Wolfgang Endter: 1644–1645; reprint, Tübingen: 1966), quoted as PS/FPS; Harsdörffer Georg Philipp – Staden Sigmund Gottlieb, *Die Tugendsterne*, in Harsdörffer G.P., *Frauenzimmer Gesprächspiele*, ed. I. Böttcher, V. Teil, Deutsche Neudrucke. Reihe Barock 17 (Nuremberg, Wolfgang Endter: 1645; reprint, Tübingen: 1969) 280–310 (libretto and conversational game) and [633–670] (musical score in the appendix), quoted as TS.
  - 3 Harsdörffer Georg Philipp – Staden Sigmund Gottlieb, *Ein Geistliches Waldgedicht. Seelewig*, in Harsdörffer G.P., *Frauenzimmer Gesprächspiele*, ed. I. Böttcher, IV. Teil, Deutsche Neudrucke. Reihe Barock 16 (Nuremberg, Wolfgang Endter: 1644; reprint, Tübingen: 1968) 33–165 (libretto and conversational game) and 489–622 (musical score), quoted as SE. Libretto Wolfenbüttel: *Ein Geistliches Wald-Gedicht/ Darinnen vorgestellt wird Wie der böse Feind den frommen Seelen auff vielerley Weise nachtrachtet etc. Dessen Titel heist Seelewig* (Wolfenbüttel, Johann and Heinrich Stern: 1654).
  - 4 Negri Niccolò, *Favola boscareccia et spirituale: L'Anima Felice* (Venice, Alessandro de' Vecchi: 1609). German translation: *Ein gar Schön Geistliches Waldgetichte/ genant Die Glückseelige Seele/ Auß Zihrllichem Welnsch in gemeines Deutsch gebracht* ([Breslau:] 1637). Both sources are discussed in the contributions by Wade M.R., "Seelewig: The Earliest Extant German Opera and its Antecedent", *Daphnis* 14 (1985) 559–578; Caemmerer C., "Das geistliche Waldgetichte: Die glückseelige Seele von 1637 und seine Quelle", *Daphnis* 16, 4 (1987) 665–678; Schütze R., "Auf Teufel komm raus. Wie Harsdörffers Seelewig ihren Prätext zerstört", *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 84, 4 (2010) 448–477. Essential studies on Seelewig: Keller P., *Die Oper Seelewig von Sigmund Theophil Staden und Georg Philipp Harsdörffer* (Bern: 1977); Wade M.R., *The German Baroque Pastoral 'Singspiel'*, *Berner Beiträge zur Barockgermanistik* 7 (Bern: 1990) 109–190; Brugiére-Zeiß D.,

\* Deutsche Namen. \*

33 CLV.

### Ein Geistliches Waldgedicht.

Und vermeine darinnen vorzustellen/ wie der böse Feind den frommen Seelen/ auf vielerley Wege nachtrachtet/ und wie selbe hinweg/ von dem Gewissen und dem Verstande/ durch Gottes Wort/ vom ewigen Unheil abgehalten werden.

1. J. Der Vortrag ist zu loben. Wie heist aber ferner der Titel solches Geistlichen Waldgedichtes.

2. R. Wie sonst andere Schriften von der vornehmsten Person den Namen haben/ als Argenis/ Eromena/ Ariane/ Dianca/ u. d. g. so habe ich auch dieses Werklein genennet:

### Seelewig.

verschied die ewige Seele/ gleichwie man sagt. Seewig/ Ludwig/ Brunswick oder Brynswig/ diese Endung wil D. Luther vom Weichen herleiten/ und schreibe Herrwig

a

489

### Das Geistliche Waldgedicht/

oder  
Freudenspiel/  
genant

# SELEWIG/

Gesangswels  
auf  
Italianische Art  
gesetzt.

b

## Ein Geistliches Wald-Gedicht /

Darinnen vorgestellt wird  
Wie der böse Feind den frommen Seelen auff  
vielerley Weise nachtrachtet/ Und dieselbe hinweg/ von dem Gewissen  
und dem Verstande/ durch Gottes Wort/ vom ewigen Unheil abgehalten  
werden.

Dessen Titel heist  
Seelewig/  
Von der fürnehmsten Person dieses Wald-Gedichts.  
Die andern Personen heissen:  
Hergigild/ Künsteling/  
Sinnigunda/ Reichemuth/  
Gewissbuda/ Ehrelob/  
Trugewald.  
Und folget zu Ende einer jeden Handlung  
Ein Chor der: Hirten/  
Nymfen/  
Engel,

\* \* \*

Wolfenbüttel/  
Gedruckt/ bey Johaß und Heinrich Stern/  
Im Jahr M. DC. LX.

c

FIGURE 9.1 Title pages to Georg Philipp Harsdörffer – Sigmund Gottlieb Staden, *Ein Geistliches Waldgedicht*. Seelewig: a. *Conversational game*; b. *Musical score*, both in Harsdörffer, *Frauenzimmer Gesprächspiele*, ed. I. Böttcher, iv. Teil, *Deutsche Neudrucke, Reihe Barock 16* (Nuremberg, Wolfgang Endter: 1644; reprint, Tübingen: 1968) 33 and 489; c. *Libretto Wolfenbüttel Ein Geistliches Wald-Gedicht etc. Dessen Titel heist Seelewig* (Wolfenbüttel, Johann and Heinrich Stern: 1654).

Italian model, especially with regard to the role of the nymphs. He has, indeed, made *Seelewig* a proper play of nymphs.

The present paper traces the functions of this “nymphisation” in the specific religious context referred to above and examines the role of the nymphs in the aesthetics of the early Pegnitz Flower Society in general, especially with regard to their theory of inspiration based in Christianity.

### Elemental Nymphs: Bucolic and Religious Inspiration

‘Qwellinwohnerinnen’ (‘inhabitants of the source’, PS 7) – this is what the first ‘Shepherds of the Pegnitz’ called the nymphs of the local river in Nuremberg, the Pegnitz, which they termed ‘Nymphen-Bad’ or ‘Haus der Najaden’ (‘bath of nymphs’ or ‘house of the naiads’, FPS 26).<sup>5</sup> These descriptive names contain many characteristics of a specific type of nymph that represents fundamental aspects of the society’s aesthetics. I would like to call this first type of nymph the “elemental nymph”.

Elemental nymphs usually appear in groups rather than as individuals, as the plural terms above indicate.<sup>6</sup> They do not appear to have a specific shape or stature, but rather seem to share their materiality with their natural surroundings. It can be said that they are shaped by the metonymic relationship with forest, air, and water.<sup>7</sup> Even Echo, one of the few Nuremberg nymphs to appear individually, not only blends – in her transformed state as sound – with the element of air, but also loses her status as an individual and becomes a fragmented character: she can be encountered in many different places at the same time and gains a new personality in every context in which she appears, depending on the initial sound or speaker. The elemental nymphs seem to merge with their *locus*. On the one hand, they thus incorporate a bucolic

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*Seelewig* de G. Ph. Harsdörffer et S. Th. Staden (1644): *un opéra? Un projet pastoral original entre musique et littérature*, Collection contacts, Série 3, Etudes et documents 59 (Bern: 2003).

5 In their first two prose eclogues: [Harsdörffer – Klaj – Birken], *Pegnesisches Schaefergedicht* and *Fortsetzung Der Pegnitz-Schäfferey*.

6 On this ancient tradition, see Herter H., “Nymphai”, in Ziegler K. – Sontheimer W. (eds.), *Der kleine Pauly. Lexikon der Antike*, vol. 4 (Munich: 1972) 207–215, here 208.

7 In Greek and Latin mythology, the terms ‘nymph’ and ‘water’ were often used metonymically, based, likewise, on the sound analogy and pseudo-etymology of Lat. *nympha* and *lympa*. Herter, “Nymphai” 209; and “Nymphen, Nymphen, Nymfen, und Nimfen”, in Zedler Johann Heinrich, *Grosses vollständiges Universal-Lexikon*, vol. 24 (Leipzig – Halle, Johann Heinrich Zedler: 1740; reprint, Graz: 1961) 1750–1753, here 1750.

*ornatus*. On the other, they attain a specific significance that corresponds with their physical characterisation.

The ornate style ('inhabitants of the source') and the images or scenes ('bath of nymphs') evoked by the expressions used for addressing these nymphs are indicators of the bucolic. The natural beauty, playfulness, and sensuality of the groups of nymphs represent an ideal space, an *Arcadia*. Yet, unlike the abstract ideal space of antiquity, the concept of this Nuremberg *Arcadia* specifies its location. This ideal space can be clearly located as it corresponds to real places in the local surroundings of Nuremberg [see Fig. 9.2].<sup>8</sup> A striking example for this is a poem in the *Pegnesisches Schaefergedicht*, where the nymphs are greeted as inhabitants of Nuremberg's Pegnitz river. Rivers, of course, are generally a metaphor for inspiration (also termed 'Quelle', 'source'), but this local specificity coincides with a general tendency of the early Pegnitz Flower Society's efforts to develop and establish their own specific – and specifically Christian – approach to literature and the arts. In the Pegnitz poetics, the bucolic is always founded on moral and religious virtues, and is often linked to panegyrics on German as a poetic language. Local nature is said to contain the raw material for this kind of art: the shapes, colours and sounds of God's creation and of an originally German and Christian landscape.<sup>9</sup>

At first sight, nymph figures do not seem to fit into the Pegnitz Flower Society's clerical orientation, an orientation that made it difficult to adopt European pastoral poetry, especially in view of the reception of antiquity. It is no coincidence, therefore, that the nymphs rarely appear as individual figures in Harsdörffer's texts. As Jörg Jochen Berns has shown regarding the cult of

8 On the beginnings of *Arcadia*'s local specification in German pastorals, see Michelsen P., "Sieh, das Gute liegt so nah'. Über Martin Opitz' *Schäfferey von der Nymfen Hercinie*", in Kühlmann W. – Müller-Jahncke W.-D. (eds.), *Iliaster. Literatur und Naturkunde in der Frühen Neuzeit. Festgabe für Joachim Telle zum 60. Geburtstag* (Heidelberg: 1999) 191–200. The 'treasures' of local nature are often paralleled to the 'treasures of German poetry' to be discovered in the future. Forster L., "Martin Opitzens 'Schäfferei von der Nymfen Hercinie': Eine nicht nur arkadische Pionierarbeit", in Brinkmann R. – Habersetzer K.-H. – Raabe P. – Selig K.-L. – Spahr B. L. (eds.), *Theatrum Europaeum. Festschrift für Elida Maria Szarota* (Munich: 1982) 241–251, here 248.

9 In terms of local reference, the status of the nymphs is, although not decidedly political, somewhat comparable to the one Andreas Keller has pointed out for Johan Bödiker's *Nymphe Mycale*: Keller A., "Nymphe und Schäfer in Grotte und Bibliothek: Die epistemische Allianz aus Natur und Geist am Beispiel Johann Bödikers *Nymphe Mycale*", in Delabar W. – Meise H. (eds.), *Liebe als Metapher. Eine Studie in elf Teilen*, Inter-Lit 13 (Frankfurt/M.: 2013) 77–103; see also Keller's article in this volume. Regarding Nuremberg, the political function of the nymph was emphasised further in *Die Nymphe Noris* (1650) by Johann Hellwig.

# PEGNESCHES SCHAEFERGEDICHT/

in den

## BERNGRÖBESCHEN GEZEDEN/

angestimmt  
von



STREFFON und LAZBE.



Nürnberg/ bey Wolfgang Endter.

M. DC. XXXXIV.

FIGURE 9.2 Title page to [Georg Philipp Harsdörffer – Johann Klaj], *Pegnesisches Schaefergedicht*, ed. K. Garber (Nuremberg, Wolfgang Endter: 1644–1645; reprint, Tübingen: 1966).

Pan, there were some less contested fields of reception in the early phase of the Pegnitz society. The Christian allegory of Pan can represent the totality of God's creation and authenticate the "antiquity" of German language and poetry, based on natural theology and Christian principles of inspiration. Berns

argues that distinct fields of mythological phenomena were handled differently: pagan gods could easily occupy realms that were not closely related to religion, such as the natural sciences, whereas pagan allegorisations of eroticism were considered appalling. It is not surprising, therefore, that the traditionally lascivious Pan could not be shown accompanied by his nymphs.<sup>10</sup>

Nevertheless, the nymphs for their part can also meet the criteria of a more innocuous reception of antiquity. Not only do they know how to hide in groups and how to merge with their natural surroundings; since antiquity, they have also frequently been associated with chastity and virtue. Based on this tradition, Harsdörffer even brings specific nymphs like Syrinx into play, although clearly dissociated from their original Ovidian context. In early modern allegory, Syrinx's transformation was Christologically interpreted as the immersion of the soul in God, or in the praise of God.<sup>11</sup> Likewise, the conversion of Harsdörffer's nymph Seelewig culminates in her praise of God, followed by the concluding choir of angels. Also, the pan flute as an emblem of the Pegnitz Flower Society corresponds to the transformed or rather sublimated form of the nymph Syrinx.

There seems to be a preference among the Nuremberg poets for nymphs associated with sounds, music and musical language. This applies to the Naiads (water nymphs) as well as to Echo, an Oread (a mountain nymph). Both elements, water and air (with which Echo merges), are closely connected to ideas of inspiration not only in a traditional sense of "source" and "spirit", but also because of their relationship to sound.<sup>12</sup> In the poetry of the Nuremberg Pegnitz Flower Society, stretches of water as producers of sound are, above all, an essential image of and inspiration for musical language. Once water is mentioned in a Nuremberg poetic text, the language becomes melodious, with an increased number of alliterations, rhymes and musical metres (e.g., the dactyl). Air, on the other hand, is regarded as the body of sound. Comparable

10 In the play *Vorstellung des WaldGott Pans* (1643) by Justus Georg Schottelius, Pan and Echo are, in complete opposition to the popular myths, united as a respectable married couple (this may have been inspired by Lucian).

11 Lange J., "Ein Pan für jede Tonart? Pans Jagd auf die Nympe Syrinx zwischen Mythos, Moral und Kunst", in Lange J. – Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister Kassel (eds.), *Pan und Syrinx. Eine erotische Jagd. Peter Paul Rubens, Jan Brueghel und ihre Zeitgenossen*, Kataloge der Staatlichen Museen Kassel 31, Patrimonia 245 (Kassel: 2002) 41–57, here 43.

12 On the association of water with play and sound, see Hofmann D., "Delectatio, Pan und Pegnitz. Die Frauenzimmer Gesprächspiele von Georg Philipp Harsdörffer", in Kaden C. – Kalisch V. (eds.), *Von delectatio bis entertainment. Das Phänomen der Unterhaltung in der Musik. Arbeitstagung der Fachgruppe Soziologie und Sozialgeschichte der Musik in Düsseldorf am 22. und 23. November 1997*, Musik-Kultur 7 (Essen: 2000) 41–52, here 46.

to the relationship between nymphs and the elements, music also relates to air and water metonymically.

As it turns out, this metonymic relationship to natural elements not only has bucolic but also clerical connotations that provide a basis for their religious use. In social circles like the Nuremberg patricians, which included Lutheran theologians,<sup>13</sup> art production was based on religious principles or at least needed to be compatible with them (the term legitimization has to be used carefully, as it often seems to exclude intrinsic motivation). In Nuremberg, the theatre was a particularly contested field when it came to clerical utility. Since the beginning of the seventeenth century, influential theologians had tried to restrict or ban public performances.<sup>14</sup> One of our main sources, Harsdörffer's experimental musical play *Seelewig*, additionally brings a modern, exclusively secular bucolic genre from Italy into play, the opera, which, naturally, needs justification. Astonishingly, at first sight, he does so by introducing the play with an emphatic element borrowed from the opera – a prologue by the allegory Musica, as in Claudio Monteverdi's *Orfeo* (1607). This means, however, that Musica figuratively speaks for herself. The argumentation includes not only superficial legitimization but also motifs that are essential to the aesthetics of the Pegnitz Flower Society: by virtue of its origins in the choirs of angels and its biblical foundation, music is predestined for clerical use, Musica claims.<sup>15</sup> As 'Wiederhall der himmlischen Freuden [...] hier auf Erden' ('echo of the heavenly joy on earth', SE 47), music grants, if used the right way, a positive affective

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- 13 See, e.g., Rohmer E., "Literatur und Theologie in Nürnberg. Johann Michael Dilherr und der Pegnesische Blumenorden", in Solbach A. (ed.), *Aedificatio. Erbauung im interkulturellen Kontext in der frühen Neuzeit. Ergebnisse einer interdisziplinären Tagung, Mainz, 5. bis 7. April 2002* (Tübingen: 2005) 267–283; or Havsteen S., "Der musiktheologische Diskurs in der Musikanschauung Georg Philipp Harsdörffers", in Keppler-Tasaki S. – Kocher U. (eds.), *Georg Philipp Harsdörffers Universalität. Beiträge zu einem uomo universale des Barock. Dokumentation der Tagung anlässlich Georg Philipp Harsdörffers 400. Geburtstag vom 1.–3.11.2007 an der Freien Universität Berlin*, Frühe Neuzeit 158 (Berlin: 2011) 197–211.
  - 14 See Paul M., "Wider das 'Spiel vom Teufel Heer'. Harsdörffer und das christliche Schauspiel bei den Nürnbergern im Kontext zeitgenössischer Theaterfeindlichkeit", in Gerstl D. (ed.), *Georg Philipp Harsdörffer und die Künste*, Schriftenreihe der Akademie der Bildenden Künste in Nürnberg 10 (Nuremberg: 2005) 143–157.
  - 15 For a detailed analysis of the prologue, see Havsteen, "Der musiktheologische Diskurs"; Kaminski N., "ut pictura poesis? Arbeit am Topos in Georg Philipp Harsdörffers *Seelewig*", in Borgstedt T. – Czarnecka M. – Jablecki T. (eds.), *Frühneuzeitliche Stereotype. Zur Produktivität und Restriktivität sozialer Vorstellungsmuster. V. Jahrestagung der Internationalen Andreas Gryphius Gesellschaft Wrocław, 8.–11. Oktober 2008*, Jahrbuch für Internationale Germanistik, Reihe A, Kongressberichte 99 (Bern: 2010) 367–397; Scheitler I., "Harsdörffer und die Musik. *Seelewig* im Kontext deutschsprachiger Musikdramatik", in Keppler-Tasaki – Kocher (eds.), *Georg Philipp Harsdörffers Universalität*, 213–235.

impact and virtuous guidance.<sup>16</sup> There are several allusions to this “right way”, albeit *ex negativo*: besides its problematic misuse in secular contexts, music should also not be too artificial. It should not be ‘mit Uppigkeit gebunden’ or ‘mit Grillwerk [...] behengt’ (‘bound with luxuriance’ or ‘decorated with excessive ideas’, SE 43). On one hand, this “natural simplicity” is predicated on church chant. On the other hand, the proximity to the original, elemental nature of music seems to grant the values that are traditionally connected to it: due to its numerical constitution, music represents cosmic harmony.

How similarly the nature of music and the nymph Echo were regarded becomes evident in Harsdörffer’s musical conversational game *Tugendsterne*. The libretto (discussed within the game), which was also set to music by Sigmund Gottlieb Staden, deals with the traditional connection between musical keys, planets and virtues. Here, the opening speech is held by Echo [Fig. 9.3]. This is no coincidence since the speculative connections of Pythagoras and Heinrich Glarean also apply to her:<sup>17</sup> as sound, she represents cosmic harmony in many texts.<sup>18</sup> However, in the seventeenth century, music and sound, and thus also the echo, were increasingly understood not only as a speculative, but also as a sensually perceivable connection between heaven and earth. According to Athanasius Kircher, sound can function as an ‘animorum vehiculum’, or a ‘soul’s elevator to heaven’, to cite Melanie Wald’s pointed translation.<sup>19</sup> The opening speech in *Tugendsterne* reveals how closely connected the speculative and sensual can be: the planets, for example the sun, are said to decorate, nurture and rule the world by ‘touching the world in a heavenly way’ (‘das irdische himmlisch berühren’, TS 284). The material connection becomes even more specific in the case of the echo – which is presented and discussed as a personalised fictional character as well as the natural phenomenon –, as one of the commentaries to the prologue indicates: ‘Weil der Echo gleichsam zwischen Himmel und Erden in Lufft sein Wesen hat’ (‘Since the echo is an aerial being in between heaven and earth’), it is ‘billich die Vorrednerin’ (‘rightly the speaker of the prologue’, TS 285). As sound, the echo has a speculative connection

16 On the moral impact of the musical setting in *Seelewig*, see Alms A., “Sound Theology: Musical Morality in the Opera *Seelewig*”, *Journal of Music Research Online*, 18.08.2011.

17 Harsdörffer (with his play on the seven musical keys) references Heinrich Glarean’s *Dodekachordon* (1547), a (quite old-fashioned) treatise on the twelve (!) musical keys, TS 281.

18 E.g., in Harsdörffer’s *Tugendsterne*, of course, and in poems by Friedrich Spee (in *Güldenens Tugendbuch*, 1627/28 and *Trutz-Nachtigall*, 1632), by Johann Klaj (in *Höllen- und Himmelfahrt Jesu Christi*, 1644) and, especially in the second half of the century, in many occasional poems like funerary poems or epithalamia.

19 Wald M., “Kanon, Kombinatorik, Echokompositionen. Die musikalische Vermittlung zwischen Himmel und Erde in der Frühen Neuzeit”, *Musiktheorie* 23, 1 (2008) 51–70, cit. 53.





FIGURE 9.3 Copper engraving to the prologue of Georg Philipp Harsdörffer – Sigmund Gottlieb Staden, *Die Tugendsterne*, in Harsdörffer, *Frauenzimmer Gesprächspiele*, ed. I. Böttcher, V. Teil, *Deutsche Neudrucke, Reihe Barock* 17 (Nuremberg, Wolfgang Endter: 1645; reprint, Tübingen: 1969) 282.

to the theory of virtues, but nevertheless, it gives evidence to the cosmic order through sensual mediation. As this example shows, the value of creation as God's work began at that time to be increasingly defined not only by the *ordo creationis*, but by sense perception, expressed in the amazement at what can be seen, heard and felt in God's creation. Such perception can in turn become a Christological foundation for art production: nature is the 'provider of raw material', and the arts create 'something useful for humans out of it'.<sup>20</sup> With regard to pastoral literature, this means that general bucolic indicators without clear correlations to ambiguous ancient figures did not necessarily have to be seen as worldly.<sup>21</sup> The fashionable nymphs could, on the contrary, contribute to the

20 'Zwar ist die Natur der Lieferant des Rohmaterials, aber die Kunst ist es, die daraus etwas für den Menschen Nützliches entstehen läßt', see Heinecke B., "Naturphilosophie bei Georg Philipp Harsdörffer", in Keppler-Tasaki S. – Kocher U. (eds.), *Georg Philipp Harsdörffers Universalität. Beiträge zu einem uomo universale des Barock*, Frühe Neuzeit 158 (Berlin: 2011) 247–278, here 256.

21 See also Caemmerer C., "Die Etablierung des christlich-allegorischen Schäferspiels als Alternative zum weltlichen Schäferspiel", in Caemmerer C., *Siegender Cupido oder Triumpfierende Keuschheit* (Stuttgart: 1998) 243–304; or Elferen I. van, *Mystical Love in the German Baroque: Theology, Poetry, Music*, Contextual Bach Studies 2 (Lanham: 2009).

image of creation as a sensual, but virtuous work of art – due to their elemental nature, and especially as a substance of natural sound.

### Human Nymphs: Bucolic Virtue and the Externalisation of Evil in *Seelewig*

A second type of nymph can be found mainly in Harsdörffer's musical play and conversational game *Geistliches Waldgedicht Seelewig*. Here, too, the nymphs occupy a space between the individual and the group – even between the literal and the allegorical –, but, at the same time, their embodiment is crucial. This embodiment plays, I argue, an important and exemplary role in the view of the bucolic and the reception of art based on Christian virtues.

*Seelewig* is an allegorical play about the nymph Seelewig and the diabolical satyr Trügewalt who tries to seduce her. Trügewalt uses the help of Künsteling, representing the arts and sciences, and of two other shepherds, Ehrelob and Reichimut, representing worldly honour and wealth. Accordingly, they present the nymph with artistic gifts like lyrics and artful crafts and even invent fun games to delude her. Seelewig herself is accompanied by the nymphs Sinnigunda (the sensual), Hertzigilda (the rational), and Gwissulda (conscience). Seelewig's closest companion, Sinnigunda, has a precarious status, as she often unintentionally assists the seducers. But with the guidance of Hertzigilda and Gwissulda, in the end, the nymph is brought back onto the right track.

To understand the specific design of Harsdörffer's play, some traditional discourses have to be taken into account, especially its direct sources. The main idea and many text passages derive from Niccolò Negri's *Favola boscareccia et spirituale: L'Anima Felice* (1609), translated into German in 1637.<sup>22</sup> Negri found inspiration for his play in Emilio Cavaliere and Agostino Manni's *Rappresentatione di anima et di corpo*, an *anima-et-corpo* play that consists of dialogues between allegorical figures such as Anima, Corpo, Intelletto, Consiglio, Piacere, Tempo, Vita Mondana, Anime dannate/beate, etc.<sup>23</sup> Negri's *Favola boscareccia* is based on this idea, but while Cavaliere/Manni's piece is a non-scenic educational dialogue, Negri introduces an actual scenic plot.

22 *Ein gar Schön Geistliches Waldgetichte/genant Die Glückseelige Seele*. Both sources are discussed in the contributions by Wade, "Seelewig"; Caemmerer, "Das geistliche Waldgetichte"; Schütze, "Auf Teufel komm raus".

23 On the popularity of the theme of *anima* and *corpo* in contemporary dramas, see Wade, "Seelewig" 570, n. 13.

Harsdörffer's text differs considerably from Negri's play. There is little agreement amongst researchers on what intention these changes reflect.<sup>24</sup> Regarding the poetics of the nymphs, a comparison of the lists of characters is already revealing:

Agostino Manni/ Emilio Cavaliere	Nicolò Negri	Anonymous translator	Georg Philipp Harsdörffer
<i>Rappresentazione di anima, et di corpo</i>	<i>Anima felice. Favola boscareccia et spirituale</i>	<i>Schön Geistliches Waldgetichte</i>	<i>Ein Geistliches Waldgedicht. Seelewig</i>
Rome 1600	Venice 1609	[Breslau] 1637	Nuremberg 1644
	Amor divino, Pastore	Liebe Gottes, Pastor	
	Cupido	Irrdische Liebe, Cupido	
Anima	Anima, <b>Ninfa</b>	Seele, <b>Nympha</b>	Seelewig, <b>Nymphe</b>
Corpo	Senso, Pastore	Sinn, Pastor	Sinnigunda, <b>Nymphe</b>
	Conscienza, Matrona	Gewissen, Matrona	Gwissulda, <b>Nymphe</b> /Matrone
Intelletto/ Consiglio/ Avveduto/ Prudenzio	Ragione, Reina	Vornumfft, Regina	Hertzigilda, <b>Nymphe</b>
Piacere	Diletto, Pastore	Lust, Pastor	Ehrelob, Hirte
	Riso, Pastore	Lache, Pastor	Reichimuth, Hirte
Mondo	Mondo, Pastor suntuoso	Welt, Pastor sumtuosus	Künsteling, Hirte

24 The discussion particularly encompasses the different confessional influences in relation to their contexts of creation (Wade, "Seelewig"; Caemmerer, "Das *geistliche Waldgetichte*"; Schütze, "Auf Teufel komm raus"). Some changes, particularly the omissions, are obviously owed to confessional differences, e.g., the omission of the *unio mystica* and of Catholic practises like fasting or flagellation. But with regard to profane, bucolic elements, explaining the differences simply as being confessionally motivated remains a very difficult undertaking considering the wide circulation of (translated) Italian pastoral plays across confessional borders. See Caemmerer C., "Deutsche Schäferspiele im 17. Jahrhundert. Eine Textsorte und ihre Funktionen", in Birkner N. – Mix Y.-G. – Helbig J. (eds.), *Idyllik im Kontext von Antike und Moderne* (Berlin – Boston: 2015) 78–104.

Agostino Manni/ Emilio Cavaliere	Nicolò Negri	Anonymous translator	Georg Philipp Harsdörffer
<i>Rappresentazione di anima, et di corpo</i>	<i>Anima felice. Favola boscareccia et spirituale</i>	<i>Schön Geistliches Waldgetichte</i>	<i>Ein Geistliches Waldgedicht. Seelewig</i>
Rome 1600	Venice 1609	[Breslau] 1637	Nuremberg 1644
	Bellezza celeste, Dea	Himmliche Schönheit, Dea	
	Timor di Dio, Pastore	Forchte Gottes, Pastor	
Tempo/Vita Mondana	Bellezza terrena, <b>Ninfa</b>	Irrdische Schönheit, <b>Nympha</b>	(Sinnigunda, <b>Nymphe</b> )
	Satan, Satiro	Sathan, Satyrus	Trügewalt, Satyr
	Echo, voce che risponde	Wiederhahl, Echo	(Echo)
	Buon desiderio, Pastore	Gutt Begehren, Pastor	
	Fede	Glaube, Fides	
	Speranza	Hoffnung, Spes	
	Gratia divina, Dea	Genade Gottes, Dea	
	Choro di Pastori	Hürten so singen, Chorus Pastorum	Chöre der Hirten
Angeli			Chöre der Engel
			Chöre der Nymphen
Furthermore: Compagni, Anime dannate, Angelo custode, Anime beate			Furthermore: Musica, Mahlkunst

That Harsdörffer's character Seelewig is presented as a nymph may initially be surprising. This is owed, however, to Negri, who introduced the new plot in the tradition of pastoral plays. Accordingly, the allegorical descriptions of the figures are supplemented with pastoral designations: *Piacere (Favola)* → *Diletto/*

Pastore (*Waldgetichte*). Harsdörffer goes even further by transforming the allegorical descriptions into German names: Conscienza → Gwissulda/Nymphen-Matrone. This, I argue, indicates a further embodiment or humanisation of the characters: throughout the play they seem to be individualised, emotionalised and sensualised – a development already initiated by Negri. The nymphs in particular are portrayed as sociable and sensual beings. As ‘Schwestern’ and ‘Gefertin[nen]’ (‘sisters’ and ‘companions’, e.g., SE 108 and 68) they seem to be emotionally connected.

Which brings us to the second drastic change that has not been noted before, let alone interpreted: Harsdörffer made *Seelewig* into a proper play of nymphs. For example, Negri’s pastor Senso becomes the nymph Sinnigunda,<sup>25</sup> the queen Ragione becomes the nymph Hertzigilda, and the matron Conscienza becomes the nymph/matron Gwissulda.<sup>26</sup> Thus, the nymph of the soul is surrounded by the likes of her, by nymphs representing parts of one personality. In half of the scenes in Harsdörffer’s play the nymphs remain among themselves, with the other characters appearing flat in comparison. As a counterpart to the nymphs, the shepherds form another consistent group of characters, guided by the satyr Trügewalt as the evil seducer. The third type of “characters”, Musica (prologue), the Choir of Angels (with recourse to Cavalieri/Manni), and Visual Art (epilogue), represent a meta-level dissociated from the plot, commenting on various aspects of the play’s design.

Thus, regarding the figures of the plot, there remain two consistent groups (nymphs and shepherds) acting against one another. The same can be said for the allegorical level:<sup>27</sup> sense perception, reason and conscience (the nymphs)

Nymphs	Satyr & Shepherds	“Non-plot” characters
Seelewig	Trügewald	Musica
Sinnigunda	Künsteling	Engelchor
Hertzigilda	Ehrelob	Mahlkunst
Gwissulda	Reichimuth	

25 Sinnigunda is also associated with Negri’s only other nymph *Bellezza terrena*, whose story (her beauty fades in order to demonstrate the transience of earthly beauty), however, disappears in Harsdörffer’s concept.

26 In ancient mythology, nymphs often appear as wet nurses of the gods and heroes. Herter, “Nymphai” 212; Zedler, “Nymphen” 1751.

27 Negri’s personifications of godly virtues have been completely left out, and the worldly sins have been drastically reduced.

are interdependent, interior aspects of personality, whose interplay finally decides the soul's fate. Conversely, the shepherds represent the external temptations in the world as the work of evil: pride, wealth, or the arts. Arranging the characters into two opposite groups reflects the duality of good and evil and thereby has the effect of externalising evil, so to speak.<sup>28</sup>

The “nymphisation” of the allegorical figures leads to a paradoxical constellation of humanisation, sensualisation, and individualisation on the one hand,<sup>29</sup> and segmentation or fragmentation (into the senses, reason, and conscience) on the other, comparable to the condition of the elemental nymphs. Both tendencies, however, also help convey virtues. Humanising and sensualising these figures, as well as depicting them singing [see Fig. 9.4], establishes a basis for personal identification both on an extra- and intradiegetic level. Accordingly, the human nymphs serve as tangible role models within reach of



FIGURE 9.4 *Copper engraving to Georg Philipp Harsdörffer – Sigmund Gottlieb Staden, Ein Geistliches Waldgedicht. Seelewig, in Harsdörffer, Frauenzimmer Gesprächspiele, ed. I. Böttcher, iv. Teil, Deutsche Neudrucke, Reihe Barock 16 (Nuremberg, Wolfgang Endter: 1644; reprint, Tübingen: 1968) 82.*

28 I address the question of why Sinnigunda should not be counted among the evil figures and the problem of the arts below.

29 Peter Michelsen argues in favor of a general ‘Vermenschlichungsprozeß’ (‘process of humanisation’) of the nymphs in modern history. Michelsen, “Sieh, das Gute liegt so nah” 196.

the audience. On a more abstract level, the segmentation or fragmentation of the individual nymph into single personality parts as well as the appearance of nymphs in collective groups emphasises virtues like propriety, modesty, chastity and sweetness. Characterizing nymphs as sociable beings merges aristocratic and, with regard to literature, bucolic values with religious concepts. However, there is one value based on this segmentation that turns out to be an essential condition for all of the others: the discursive, and therefore analytic quality demonstrated by this collective of nymphs, a quality that makes *Seelewig* a play of interpretation.

### Trügewalt as Pseudo-Pan: *Seelewig* and the Arts

It is not immediately evident why Harsdörffer would chose Negri's *Waldgedicht* as a source for his quite experimental musical and emblematic play *Seelewig*. Using this plot – with a protagonist who is misled with the help of the arts and sciences – to try out and proclaim a new art form in fact causes a performative contradiction, not to mention tensions between the play and its context. While the somewhat encyclopaedic *Frauenzimmer Gesprächspiele* freely connect and combine various art forms and general knowledge, some of Harsdörffer's other collections of writings like the *Erquickstunden* clearly aim to present as much scientific knowledge as possible. Considering this, the warning 'Viel wissen bläset auf' ('much knowledge inflates', SE 53) in the *Seelewig* conversational game is perplexing.

That Harsdörffer chose this source anyway could have something to do with the hostility towards the theatre of many contemporaries in Nuremberg, as mentioned above. This hostility was met with efforts to supply decidedly clerical texts.<sup>30</sup> As *Seelewig*'s prologue announces: 'Ein Geistliches Gedicht ohn eitlen Ruhm und Ehr' ('A religious poem without vain fame and honour', SE 44) will be heard here. This strategy of legitimation is understandable, but it remains puzzling why Harsdörffer would not only choose a source arguing against the arts and the sciences, but also foreground the aesthetic dialogue – and the contradictions – even more than the source text did. On various levels of the play there are changes and additions that emphasise or comment on the topic of the arts: the modern continuous musical setting, the many illustrations in the print *Gesprächspiele*, the character Künsteling replacing Negri's character Mondo/Welt ('world'), the new prologue and epilogue by Musica ('music') and Mahlkunst ('visual arts'), the plot beginning with a stand-alone

30 See Paul, "Wider das 'Spiel vom Teufel Heer'"; and Caemmerer, "Die Etablierung des christlich-allegorischen Schäferspiels".

scene by Künsteling watching himself in the water like Narcissus,<sup>31</sup> and, last but not least, the emblematic dialogue and other aesthetic comments in the accompanying conversational game.

To further explore this topic, it is important to understand the structure of this particular conversational game [see Fig. 9.5]. At its centre, there is a libretto of the play or rather the *singspiel* or opera; it is the “primary poetic object” to be discussed. Also, a discussion takes place after every scene. The participants of the conversational game discuss various aspects of the plot, performance, costumes, musical setting, poetic means, metre and of course the moral implications. Every participant has an individual task of commentary assigned to them by Reymund, the game master (SE 39). At the same time, the participants bring up new aesthetic objects to be discussed. For example, Vespasian has the task of thinking of emblematic topics and phrases corresponding to every scene of the play,<sup>32</sup> which in turn have to be interpreted again – a process clearly emphasising the ‘Schwestern’ arts (‘sister arts’, SE 157).<sup>33</sup> Therefore, any discussion of the play’s aesthetic parameters has to consider the conversational game as a whole, including the commentaries surrounding the libretto.<sup>34</sup>

One character in *Seelewig* who has not yet been connected to the topic of the arts is Trügewalt, the diabolical seducer. He can, in my opinion, be linked to a figure representing the *artes liberales*: to the god of the shepherds, Pan. The popular patron of the Pegnitz Flower Society is given an elaborate introduction before the play begins.<sup>35</sup> Yet he does not seem to appear in the play itself. However, out of all the characters, it is Trügewalt as personification of

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- 31 On Narcissus as the inventor of the visual arts, see Wolf G., “Arte superficiem illam fontis amplecti. Alberti, Narziss und die Erfindung der Malerei”, in Götter Ch. – Hofstede U.M. – Patz K. – Zollikofer K. (eds.), *Diletto e Maraviglia. Ausdruck und Wirkung in der Kunst von der Renaissance bis zum Barock* (Emsdetten: 1998) 10–39.
  - 32 The illustrations of the play, too, have narrative as well as allegorical meaning. Zeller R., “Sinnkünste. Sinnbilder und Gemälde in Harsdörffers ‘Frauenzimmer Gesprächspielen’”, in Gerstl, *Georg Philipp Harsdörffer und die Künste* 215–229.
  - 33 According to Harsdörffer, emblematic practice aims at the alliance of the different art forms. Harsdörffer Georg Philipp, *Der Grosse Schau-Platz jämmerlicher Mordgeschichte* (Hamburg, Johann Naumann: 1656) 4.
  - 34 I thus do not agree with Bauer-Roesch, who argues that there is no aesthetic discussion within the dramatic text itself. Bauer-Roesch S., “Gesangspiel und Gesprächspiel – Georg Philipp Harsdörffers *Seelewig* als erste Operntheorie in deutscher Sprache”, in Laufhütte H. (ed.), *Künste und Natur in Diskursen der Frühen Neuzeit*, Teil 1, Wolfenbütteler Arbeiten zur Barockforschung 35 (Wiesbaden: 2000) 645–664, here 646.
  - 35 The play *Seelewig* is preceded by a passage about Pan, Perseus and Bacchus (SE 15–32), representing the pastoral, tragedy and comedy, or rather natural philosophy, politics, and morality. Berns J.J., “Gott und Götter. Harsdörffers Mythenkritik und der Pan-Theismus der Pegnitzschäfer unter dem Einfluss Francis Bacons”, in Battafarano I.M. (ed.), *Georg*



\* Dünkelwitz. \*

CLVII. Noch harret noch starret die haßliche Struht/  
 weisend meins Angesichts niedliche Hellen.  
 Lasset die Ströme sich häuffen und schwellen/  
 Mein Vilde hier dennoch im Lauffen beruhet!  
 Bey hiesigem Lande/  
 in kießlichem Strande/  
 bestehets und gehet:  
 doch können die Stralen  
 mit nichten bemahlen  
 die Menschliche Ned'.

2. C. Diese und dergleichen Sonnet oder Klingereimen mögen auf mancherley Art gesetzt werden/hier ist eine gleiche/ doch schickliche Mensur.  
 3. D. Man heisset es dactylische oder klingende Springereimen/und ist eine sonder Art/ welche mit sechs sylbigen Reimzeilen endet.

4. J.

\* Dünkelwitz. \*

4. J. Daß der Künstling sein Bildniß in dem Fluß betrachcet/lehret/wie der  
 Wissenschaften größtes Belieben in ihnen selbst ist. Der Gelehrten Leben ist  
 Bedenken/ ins gemein haben sie das höchste Wohlgefallen an ihren Schriften/und  
 werden vielmal solche Narcissi/ die andere neben ihnen verachten / sich herfür-  
 brüsten/und vermeinē ihres gleichen sey schwerlich anzutreffen. Diese Schwach-  
 heit der Gelehrten hat der Apostel Paulus bemerkt mit diesen Worten:

CLVII.  
 Sapientis  
 vita est co-  
 gitare.

1. Cor. 3/ 1,

### Viel wissen bläset auf.

5. V. Die Frau weißt mir unwissend / daß ich zu einem Sinnbild ertiesen solle  
 ein Faß mit neuem ungesundem Wein/ welches das Böse von sich gieret; bene-  
 bens einer Flaschen mit altem gerechtem Wein. Jener bedeutet die eitle ver-  
 meinte Wissenschaft der jungen schwülstigen Leute / so sich besagter massen auf-  
 zublehen pfleget: Diese die reine und lautere Erfahrung der Alten / welche sich  
 lange Zeit unbeweget bey guten Kräften befindet/ mit dem Beywort:

### Bestehend entgehet.

G iii

6. 21.

FIGURE 9.5 Georg Philipp Harsdörffer – Sigmund Gottlieb Staden, Ein Geistliches Waldgedicht. Seelewig, in Harsdörffer, Frauenzimmer Gesprächspiele, ed. I. Böttcher, IV. Teil, Deutsche Neudrucke, Reihe Barock 16 (Nuremberg, Wolfgang Endter: 1644; reprint, Tübingen: 1968) 52–53.

the devil that appears in the shape of Pan, the shape of a satyr. In the context of contemporary research on *Seelewig*, Jörg Jochen Berns is the only one to point out this curious coincidence. The devil in satyr's shape may partly be explained by the iconography of the devil in the seventeenth century.<sup>36</sup> And yet

Philipp Harsdörffer. *Ein deutscher Dichter und europäischer Gelehrter. Beiträge des 3. Germanisten-Treffens*, 5.–7. Dezember 1989 in Trient, Iris 1 (Bern: 1991) 23–81, cit. 65.

36 Berns, "Gott und Götter" 70–71, no. 119.

the juxtaposition of Pan and Trügewalt is confusing, or rather intriguing. On closer inspection, this juxtaposition also appears in the play itself, even if only in a copperplate engraving made for act III,1 [Fig. 9.6]. In this image, Trügewalt can clearly be identified as Pan by his syrinx, his flute, lying next to him on the floor. Additionally, in the dialogues, Trügewalt points out repeatedly that the forest is his kingdom or realm, and that the shepherds are his helpers, comparable to Pan's realm and entourage in classical mythology.

As regards the moral implications of the play, this connotation proves highly productive on an interpretational level. The nymphs, fleeing the lascivious Pan and hiding in the forest, have always been associated with chastity and virtue. Arrows, bow and quiver, as well as the hymn-like dialogue about hunting (SE 92–101) evoke the virgin Diana and her chaste nymphs. Also, as mentioned above, the myth of Pan and Syrinx is alluded to in Seelewig's final metamorphosis into the praise of God. Furthermore, in early modern allegorical interpretation, the figure of Pan can be – like the mythological figure itself – curiously ambivalent: in one instance, he is the endangering devil; then he is God, searching for the soul.

Nevertheless, in the context of the Pegnitz Flower Society, the connection between the idealised Pan and the devilish character Trügewalt is remarkable. Even so, Trügewalt remains rather powerless. Could the helpless, suggestively melancholy satyr be understood as a Pseudo-Pan? In the copperplate engraving,



FIGURE 9.6  
Copper engraving  
to Georg Philipp  
Harsdörffer – Sigmund  
Gottlieb Staden,  
Ein Geistliches  
Waldgedicht. Seelewig,  
in Harsdörffer,  
Frauenzimmer  
Gesprächspiele, ed.  
I. Böttcher, IV. Teil,  
Deutsche Neudrucke,  
Reihe Barock 16  
(Nuremberg, Wolfgang  
Endter: 1644; reprint,  
Tübingen: 1968) 122.

the flute that signified cosmic harmony to the Pegnitz Flower Society – with its seven pipes representing the virtues of the planets, godly and natural inspiration and the seven *artes liberales* – lies uselessly next to Trügewalt's goat's feet. Trügewalt, who uses sciences, arts and artists to seduce Seelewig, seems to be disconnected from Pan's instrument of the arts. What does this mean?

The obvious representative of the arts, Künsteling himself, does not act as a seducer, only as a helper. On Trügewalt's order he is supposed to tame the nymph 'mit Liebe' ('with love', SE 58). Unlike the corresponding character Mondo in Negri's source text, Künsteling does not pursue the endangered soul; he is a means to an end, an artistic device. It is crucial for Harsdörffer's aesthetic that Künsteling is not equated with evil, just as the devil, Trügewalt, himself is not equated with the arts, but only exploits them as a disguise. The devil may use artistic means to cheat, to make something evident that does not conform to the truth. Therefore, not the arts themselves, but their 'Mißbrauch' ('misuse', SE 47) or their 'mißdeute[n]' ('misinterpretation', SE 71) is questioned. Vespasian's comments on the telescope are a good example of this: he calls it a 'betrüglische[s] Glas' ('deceiving glass', SE 96), and a symbol of the 'falschvermeinte Wissenschaften' ('misconceived sciences', SE 96). Although things seen through a telescope correspond to natural 'Gesicht' ('sight', SE 96), not everything that can be beheld is 'der Wahrheit gemäß' ('according to the truth', SE 96). This warning implies a gradual model: caution is always advised with sense perception, since what we see is not always according to the truth. Moreover, the means of the *artes* (like the telescope) increase the level of mediation –<sup>37</sup> and thus danger.<sup>38</sup> Although this does not undermine the

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37 The first scene with Künsteling as Narcissus, watching his reflection on the water surface, also seems to refer to this mediation: Künsteling believes he is seeing himself, but it is only an image. The water surface is like a 'transparent foil' between world and image: Kruse C., "Selbsterkenntnis als Medienkenntnis. Narziß an der Quelle bei Alberti und Caravaggio", *Marburger Jahrbuch für Kunstwissenschaft* 26 (1999) 99–116, here 101. Bearing in mind the tradition of *Ovide moralisé*, Narcissus is a clever subject for the reflection on media within a Christian framework. On the mirror in *Seelewig* as a meta-medium emphasizing mediativity's dangers as well as its potential, see Weidner D., "Medienverbund und Medienreflexion in Georg Philipp Harsdörffers *Seelewig*", in Maeda R. – Czarnicka M. – Gansel C. – Rzeszutnik J. (eds.), *Film und visuelle Medien. Multimediale und transnationale Kommunikation im Barockzeitalter. Entwicklungen in der deutschsprachigen Gegenwartsliteratur und Medien nach 1989. Literatur – Medien – Kultur im germanistischen Kontext*, Vielheit und Einheit der Germanistik weltweit 10 (Frankfurt a. M.: 2012) 227–232, here 230.

38 Conversely, Harsdörffer also considers the means of the *artes* (e.g., the telescope) as guides that sometimes even correct the 'natürlichen Hilfsmittel des Menschen, Vernunft und

means of the *artes* themselves, it is more likely a warning about misuse and a demand for cautious reconsideration because, as the prologue to the *Seelewig-Wolfenbüttel* libretto suggests:

Hierzu [to take control] gebrauchet er [the devil] nun nicht allein seine eigene verbotene Mittel sondern vielmehr solche Dinge die zuläßig / angenehm und nützlich sind / ja solche Gaben die Gott selber / als ein Gnadengeschenck denen die ihn lieben / mittheilet und darreicht.

For that [to take control] he [the devil] uses not only his own prohibited means but furthermore such things that are permissible, pleasant and useful, even such gifts that God himself communicates and proffers as a gift of grace to those who love him.<sup>39</sup>

The devil, then, uses not only his own devilish means for seduction, but rather decent, pleasant and useful things, even the gifts of God. In his *Poetischer Trichter*, Harsdörffer comments on the difficulty of allegorical interpretation, remarking that even God's Word is 'der bösen Auslegung nicht befreyet' ('not exempt from an evil interpretation') and can therefore be misused with ill intent.<sup>40</sup>

Yet, the power of the arts seems to be indispensable in Hardörffer's text, both in a positive and in a negative sense. Without Künsteling, Trügewalt remains a feeble figure. In order to seduce Seelewig, he needs the more potent arts. When gifts of seduction are presented to her, they are accompanied by perplexing panegyric speeches – not only in the libretto but also in the extradiegetic commentary of the conversational game! The masterly and orderly creation of the gifts is praised, as well as the industrious craft behind them. The lens of the telescope, considered the epitome of concentrated devilish powers, is praised at the same time as the highest work of art (SE 89 and 95). It is interesting to read this passage in the context of Harsdörffer's detailed scientific passages on the telescope compiled in the *Erquickstunden*, which clearly show

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Sinne' ('natural aids of men, reason and the senses'). Dedication and preface (unpaginated) to Harsdörffer Georg Philipp, *Delitiae Philosophicae et Mathematicae. Der Philosophischen und Mathematischen Erquickstunden. Dritter Teil* (Nuremberg, Wolfgang d. J. and Andreas Endter: 1653; reprint Frankfurt/M.: 1990). See Heinecke, "Naturphilosophie" 258.

39 In *Seelewig's* libretto for the performance in Wolfenbüttel: Harsdörffer, *Ein geistliches Wald-Gedicht*, prologue: "Des Vorreders Rede" [1].

40 Harsdörffer Georg Philipp, *Poetischer Trichter. Die Teutsche Dicht- und Reimkunst*, zweiter Teil (Nuremberg, Wolfgang Endter: 1648) 104.

his personal fascination with the telescope.<sup>41</sup> Such seeming inconsistencies are, however, not accidental.<sup>42</sup> Rather, they demonstrate an aesthetic problem and its interpretational potential.

### The Art of the Nymphs: Perception, Interpretation, and Dialogue

Both the aesthetic problem and its solution are revealed in the dialogue of the nymphs. An essential clue to the argument the play presents might lie in the behaviour of the character Sinnigunda. Representing the senses, she is a precarious figure that endangers Seelewig, the soul. Nevertheless, she is portrayed as a likeable and innocent character, as a loyal companion who is on Seelewig's side, although with a certain lack of judgement. When Sinnigunda and Seelewig walk through the world together in the first act [Fig. 9.7], they observe the landscape and are amazed at the beauty of nature and man's craft. Sinnigunda explains what they see and seems to attribute moral meaning to it, as for example when she interprets ships as an emblem of hope (SE 70). Later on, however, one of the commentators explains that Sinnigunda 'mißdeute[t]' ('misinterprets', SE 71) what she sees; no wonder, as it is not her task to interpret. Rather than interpreting, she is supposed to perceive, which is the ability given to the senses. She is not predestined to judge morally nor to assert virtuous behaviour. It would indeed be dangerous to consider her a guide for the soul, a task that reason and the conscience have to fulfil: 'Lasset uns auch mitspazieren' ('let us walk with you', SE 73), Herzigilda demands in the next scene, and Gwissulda repeatedly advises against sense perception altogether (SE 110f.). The extradiegetic in-between commentaries, however, criticise Gwissulda's statement, suggesting that she, too, does not have the final word. Rather, one should not indulge in sensibility 'all too much' ('nicht [...] alzuviel' SE 110). Sense perception, therefore, is not *entirely* to be refused.<sup>43</sup> But when

41 Harsdörffer Georg Philipp – Schwendter Daniel, *Deliciae Physico-Mathematicae. Oder Mathematische und Philosophische Erquickstunden*, ed. J.J. Berns, 3 vols. (Nuremberg, Wolfgang Endter: 1636, 1651, and 1653; reprint, Frankfurt a. M.: 1990). On Harsdörffer and the optics see e.g. Heinecke, "Naturphilosophie"; and Trinkner D., "'Optica' oder die Kunst des Sehens in Harsdörffers 'Erquickstunden'. Über Harsdörffers erkenntnistheoretisch motivierte Verzerrung naturwissenschaftlicher Lehren", in Gerstl, *Georg Philipp Harsdörffer und die Künste* 175–187.

42 Robert Schütze criticises these inconsistencies and contradictions and the shifts between allegorical and literal levels as indications of a general clumsiness. Schütze, "Auf Teufel komm raus" 456.

43 The blind man's buff scenes (act III, 5f., SE 139–147), for example, exemplify the risks of such a "no senses strategy". See Kaminski, "'ut pictura poesis'?" 394f.



FIGURE 9.7 Copper engraving to Georg Philipp Harsdörffer – Sigmund Gottlieb Staden, *Ein Geistliches Waldgedicht. Seelewig*, in Harsdörffer, *Frauenzimmer Gesprächspiele*, ed. I. Böttcher, IV. Teil, *Deutsche Neudrucke, Reihe Barock 16* (Nuremberg, Wolfgang Endter: 1644; reprint, Tübingen: 1968) 66.

moral judgment is due, when virtuous behaviour is to be inferred, more than just sense perception is required. A profound and differentiated understanding can only be gained with the addition of knowledge and experience, especially experience in playing with various interpretation strategies.

*Seelewig* is itself a play of interpretation, and the nymphs constitute a network of interpretation. In this, they mirror the structure of conversational games. In an array of symbols they fan out emblematic knowledge, showing how one and the same image can have diverging meanings (as for example the sailing ship that can be read as worldly as well as religious hope, or the ubiquitous image of the sun, an image that seems to have subtly different connotations in various contexts) and how difficult – yet important – these distinctions are with regard to proper behaviour.<sup>44</sup> The fundamental ambivalence of these images is not only problematised but also shown to have a specific

44 Wade M.R., “‘Das Beste ligt verborgen’. Georg Philipp Harsdörffer als Theoretiker und Praktiker der Sinnbildkunst”, in Gerstl (ed.), *Georg Philipp Harsdörffer und die Künste* 188–204.

potential. They call for careful consideration, for cautious judgment and for dialogue, which, for Harsdörffer, is the basis for any theory of virtue.<sup>45</sup>

Everyone can contribute something, be it the lovely but sometimes naive Sinnigunda or rational, but quite aloof Hertzigilda and Gwissulda (the difference in their gracefulness becomes especially obvious in the musical setting).<sup>46</sup> This is also evident in the portrayal of the shepherds, whose arguments, even though they pursue a questionable aim, are perfectly reasonable in some contexts, e.g., in the dialogue about their shadows, an elaborate allegoresis (SE 63–65). Various qualities of different characters are needed in the process of allegoresis, as is clearly shown in the two contrasting echo scenes. In one scene (act III, 4, SE 135–138), Seelewig and Sinnigunda are confronted with an *ecco finto*, a deceptive echo, staged by Trügewalt. Seelewig is not sure whether to believe the unfamiliar voice or not. Unsurprisingly, what Sinnigunda suggests is wrong here; she does not recognize the evil intention of the echo. The other echo scene (act II, 6, SE 115–117), in contrast, is a demonstration of the discursive qualities of the entire network of nymphs: in a ‘nymphs’ choir’ they jointly ask questions about worldly behaviour and receive answers from an echo. It warns them about flattery, worldly judgment, love, wealth and honour – in a very clear and unambiguous manner. According to the stage directions, the echo is sung by one of the nymphs themselves. It is thus not a dangerous, strange voice, but familiar and safe. When experienced and rational decoding by reason and the conscience is available, there seems to be no doubt about the rightness of the conclusions.<sup>47</sup> And yet it

45 Schütze, who criticises these inconsistencies and contradictions and the shifting between the allegorical and the literal levels, misunderstands the corresponding discussion in the commentaries as ‘Kaschierungstechniken’ (‘techniques of concealment’) meant to putty the ‘Brüche und Mehrdeutigkeiten’ (‘ruptures and ambiguities’) of the play. Schütze, “Auf Teufel komm raus” 456. Conversely, Dieter Breuer emphasises the process of allegorical interpretation as the essence of the *Gesprächspiele*. Breuer D., “Einübung ins allegorische Verstehen. Zur Funktion des Erzählens in Harsdörffers ‘Gesprächspielen’”, in Battafarano (ed.), *Georg Philipp Harsdörffer* 127–142.

46 On insight as a process of communication without the assumption of authorial truth, see Battafarano I.M., “Harsdörffers italianisierender Versuch, durch die Integration der Frau das literarische Leben zu verfeinern”, in Battafarano (ed.), *Georg Philipp Harsdörffer* 267–286, here 269ff. Daniel Weidner, too, emphasises the diverse possibilities of interpretation, suggesting that Harsdörffer’s books should not be regarded simply as ‘cold media’ or ‘mere information carriers’. Weidner, “Medienverbund und Medienreflexion” 229.

47 Wade interprets Seelewig and Sinnigunda always appearing together as ‘a fact which further underscores the notion that they allegorically represent two aspects of a single individual’, Wade, “Seelewig” 565.

would be wrong to completely deny Sinnigunda's participation in the process of understanding.

Of course, Sinnigunda does err, unknowingly missing the ultimate goal. But her amazement at the creation or her attitude towards friendship are perfectly virtuous and exemplary reactions. Moreover, some of her interpretations and explanations are, with regard to contemporary emblems, absolutely appropriate. With her knowledge of convention, i.e., knowledge about the predefined meaning of specific combinations of separate pictorial elements, she demonstrates one important requirement for adequate emblematic exegesis. She only fails to consider the specific field of application, namely Seelewig's religious education; her explanations are neither worldly nor religious, as for example when she speaks of 'sweetly burning love' ('süßbrünstige Liebe', SE 71). Nevertheless, her contribution to the dialogue is an important one, as, for the Pegnitz Flower Society's poetics, understanding is not only based on her particular ability, sense perception, but sense perception exclusively ensures a specific type of understanding.

### Nymphs as Natural *Ornatus*: Perception and Inspiration

Sinnigunda's deliberations are figurative and poetic. Here she lyrically ponders the magnificent creations of God:

Diesen befärbten [Blümelein] zu sondrem Gefallen/  
die munderen Vögelein schweben alhier/  
lassen die Zünglein und Stimmelein schallen/  
lustig die heiteren Wolken durchwallen/  
und preisen der Blümelein ruchbare Zier.

To the special delight of these colourful [flowers]  
the lively birdies soaring everywhere,  
letting their little tongues and voices ring,  
happily flying [the birds or the sound!] wavelike through the serene  
clouds,  
and praising the little flowers' famous beauty.

SE 85

Sinnigunda is both the discoverer of a natural *ornatus* and an artist who, by praising the little birds that praise the little flowers, includes herself in a hymn-like cycle. In the Pegnitz Flower Society's aesthetics, everything in God's creation is



considered as ‘natürlich ausgeredet’ (‘naturally expressive’, SE 108). Harsdörffer compares the expressivity of God’s creation with the words of a preacher or the Bible. Nature is ‘nechst dem Wort Gottes unser bester Prediger’ (‘our best preacher besides the word of God’).<sup>48</sup> The natural *ornatus* – often equated with the means of the arts – appears to speak for itself. Thus Sinnigunda, perceiving and praising nature by using natural imagery and hence by its own means, conforms to the Pegnitz Flower Society’s ideal of inspiration emerging from creation’s self-praise, as it were.

Finally, the natural *ornatus* is where the arts intersect, as Sinnigunda’s praise of the nightingale indicates:

Hör doch wie künstlich bunt ihr Meisterstimm sich wind/  
fast jedes Tons Gebänd in ihrem Ton sich find/  
wann sie die Luft durchstreicht mit einem leichten Flügel!

Listen how artificially colourful her masterly voice meanders;  
ribbons [made] of almost every tone can be found in her tone  
when she glides through the air with a light wing!

SE 131

The passage refers to various arts, since the descriptions are synesthetic: the nightingale’s ‘masterly voice’ sounds ‘colourful’, and in her tunes one can find ‘Gebänd’ (referring to poetic verses or more specifically metrics). The description of her singing and flying as a whole constitutes an animated image.<sup>49</sup> According to Harsdörffer, the combining of the ‘Sinnkünste’ (‘arts of the senses/ of meaning’) – poetry, music and visual arts – forms the ‘Bildungs-Gedächtnis und Urtheilskräfte des Menschlichen Verstandes’ (‘educational, mnemonic, and rational power of the human mind’).<sup>50</sup> Therefore, Sinnigunda’s perception of the natural *ornatus* and its poetic interpretation as a combination of the arts contributes considerably to the process of insight.

The natural expressivity of this exuberant natural *ornatus* brings us to our last example, which synthesizes and exceeds the argument: the nymph Echo. The ethereal nymph Echo, a natural phenomenon of expression, becomes a paradigm of inspiration that the Pegnitz Flower Society aspires to: when the shepherd Floridan (aka Sigmund von Birken), in the *Fortsetzung Der*

48 Harsdörffer, *Delitiae Philosophicae et Mathematicae. Dritter Teil* 177.

49 Comparably, in Lutheranism there is the idea of “imprinting” Scripture through music as a lasting image, see Havsteen, “Der musiktheologische Diskurs” 210–211.

50 Harsdörffer, *Frauenzimmer Gesprächspiele*, V. Teil (1645) preface, Av r.

*Pegnitz-Schäferey*, is searching for the nymph Echo, his verses clearly show that this aspiration is synonymous with the quest for inspiration:

Jhr Felsen dieser Gräntz' / ihr Hölen in den Gründen/  
 Jhr Tähler/ du Gebüsch/ lasst/ was ich suche/ finden.  
 Es liebt ja eure Luft/ die Luft/ nach der ich spür?  
 Hier halt ein Gegenhall. Sprich/ Echo bistu hier? Echo. du hier?

Rocks of this border, caves in the depths,  
 valleys, bushes, let me find what I am searching for.  
 For your air really loves the air I seek?  
 Here, an echo resounds. Speak, Echo, are you here? Echo. you here?

FPS 24

The 'air' Floridan is searching for is a metaphor for inspiration, and this air is metonymic with sound, in this case a specifically poetic expression by the nymph Echo, as is demonstrated in the echo lyrics that follow. As an image for and a material of inspiration that can also speak and in speaking refer to herself, even praise herself, Echo embodies a hymn-like cycle, praising creation. The fact that she is "only" able to answer, but cannot begin a conversation herself might seem deficient at first. Yet she shares her own insight on the subject under discussion. The fact that Echo gives the opening speech in the conversational game *Tugendsterne* (TS 283–284, see Fig. 9.3) is a deliberate paradox: as an echo of heavenly joy, she can stand at the beginning of the play, demonstrating that every beginning is just an echo of God's word and work. In the circular praise of creation, there is no beginning: the shepherd-poets are invited to enter into this cycle through Echo's evident nature, and explicitly through her advice. In order to achieve a proper 'Reimekunst' ('art of rhymes', FPS 25), Echo asks them to learn from the fish and the bushes and to dance a 'lauten Schäferdantz' ('loud shepherds' dance', FPS 25) and thus, figuratively, to enter into the circle of inspiration.

The poet is a crucial part of this circle, as the nymph Echo clarifies: 'Echo bistu hier? Echo. *du hier?* [...] Wend/ Echo/ dich auch du. E. *auch du* [...] jetzt merk ich dich/ E. *ich dich.*' ('Echo, are you here? – Echo. you here? [...] Turn/ Echo/ you too. – E. You too [...] 'Now I understand you' – 'E. I [understand] you', FPS 24–26).<sup>51</sup> These typical echo dialogue passages where Echo

<sup>51</sup> On the idea of this poetic circle, see a passage in Harsdörffer's conversational games, where he describes the water and the poet as both listening to each other. Harsdörffer, *Frauenzimmer Gesprächspiele*, V. Teil (1645) 54.

literally responds illustrate the relevance of the speaking and interpreting subject. Without his or her calling there will be no echo resounding and without listening and interpreting there is neither reception nor artistic production. What the poets create is part of natural and therefore godly inspiration,<sup>52</sup> as the following statement by the shepherd-poet Floridan illustrates:

Gebt her/ ihr Lüfte/ das/ womit Er [Strephon, aka Harsdörffer] euch begabt/  
Schenkt/ was er euch geschenkt/ was ihr besitzt und habt/  
So werd ich solches euch mit Wucher wieder senden.

Release, air, what he [Strephon, aka Harsdörffer] gave you as a gift,  
give, what he has given you, what you possess and have,  
then I will send such things back to you with usury.

FPS 27

Floridan asks the air to give back what it had been given by the preceding poet Strephon. Thus *imitatio* and *aemulatio* are both recontextualised in Christian natural inspiration. It is no coincidence that the Pegnitz Flower Society chose the syrinx as their first society emblem [Fig. 9.8], its single pipes representing diverse aspects of inspiration: the discursive harmony of different, but equal partners, inspired by the wind, a natural metaphor for the Holy Spirit.<sup>53</sup>

### *Aemulatio* Out of Raw Materiality

Finally, the aesthetics of the “natural *ornatus*” results in a paradoxical constellation that has a problematic as well as productive effect. The problem is based on the premise that the meaning of a natural *ornatus* is easily accessible. Its natural expressivity through the senses, its elemental, simple perception is not dependent on conventions of interpretation. However, the raw material

52 On the relationship between *ingenium* and hermeticism see Alt P.-A., “Das Imaginäre und der Logos. Hermetische Grundlagen frühneuzeitlicher Poetiken”, in Alt P.-A. – Wels V. (eds.), *Konzepte des Hermetismus in der Literatur der Frühen Neuzeit*, Berliner Mittelalter- und Frühneuzeitforschung 8 (Göttingen: 2010) 335–371, on Harsdörffer 364ff.

53 Vespasian on the syrinx: ‘Wir wollen folgen/ und mit einstimmen/ daß also aus unser aller Beytrag/ ein Werk werde/ wie aus unterschiedlichen ungleichen Rohren eine Pfeiffe zusammen gefüget wird’ (‘We shall follow and join in, that from our contributions a work may emerge, similar to a pipe that is pieced together from various unequal tubes’), see Harsdörffer, *Frauenzimmer Gesprächspiele*, VI. Teil (1646) 247.

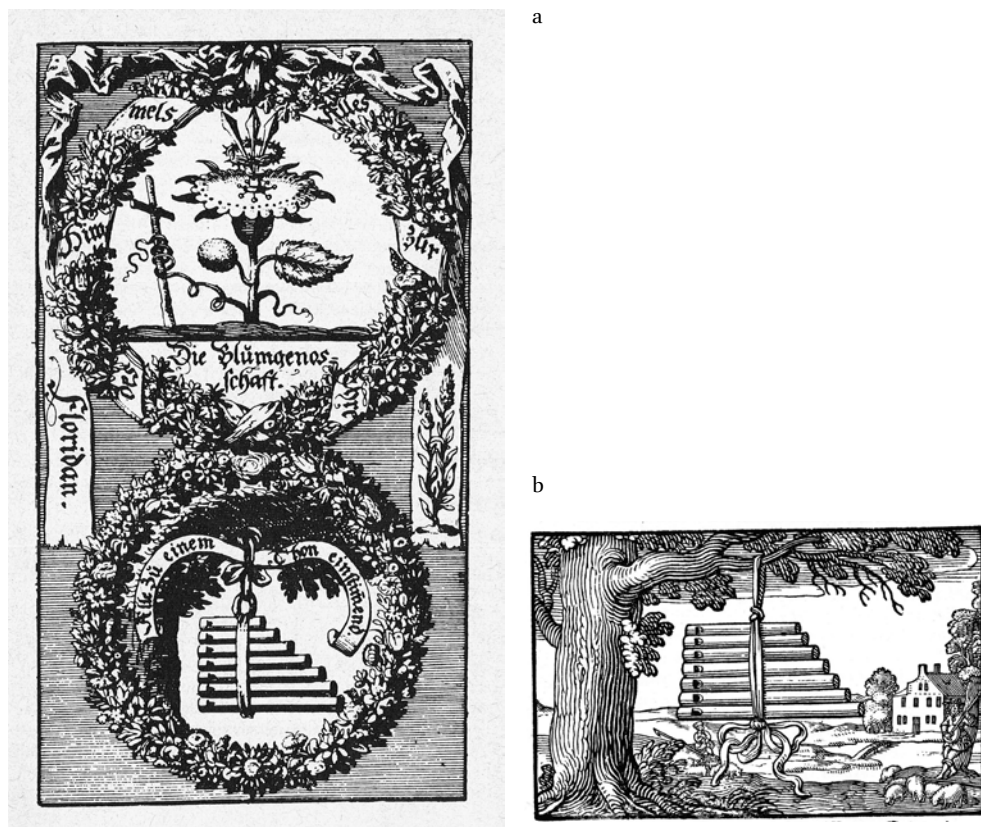


FIGURE 9.8 a. *Emblemata of the Pegnitz Flower Society, in Johann Herdegen, Historische Nachricht von deß löblichen Hirten- und Blumen-Ordens an der Pegnitz etc. (Nuremberg, Christoph Riegel: 1744), partly ed. Mannack E., Die Pegnitz-Schäfer. Nürnberger Barockdichtung (Stuttgart: 1968) 13; b. Title illustration to Sigmund von Birken, Fortsetzung Der Pegnitz-Schäferey, ed. K. Garber (Nuremberg, Wolfgang Endter: 1644–1645; reprint, Tübingen: 1966).*

also has a precarious status with regard to misuse as well as misinterpretation, both referred to above with the examples of music, pure sound that has to be used in a proper context,<sup>54</sup> or Sinnigunda, admiring the landscape, but jumping to conclusions in her attempt to interpret her perceptions. In fact, there is a paradoxical relationship here between complex constellations of meaning – as are given in the emblemata – and the supposedly simple, direct expressivity of individual natural elements. Emblematic meaning is, of course,

54 Music only gains specific moral significance in connection with texts, songs or rhythmic models, or rather its functional contexts.

based on proper education, but after all, even complex structures are at times merely conventional and unambiguous. In contrast, the meaning of individual natural phenomena accessible to everyone's perception does not seem to be clear at all. On the contrary, since such undetermined and uncontextualised elements remain open to the attribution of new meanings, their interpretation can be much more challenging. The boundaries between right and wrong can no longer be drawn clearly.<sup>55</sup> Accordingly, various statements in Harsdörffer's *Gesprächspiele* relativise the aim to discover the one and only truth, questioning conventional, topical views, as is illustrated by the following example:

Die Art in den Gesprächen zu unterweisen/ ist [...] deswegen füglicher als keine andre/ weil man allerhand Aufgaben/ nicht nur mit ja/ und nein/ sondern auf so vielerley Weise/ als der Gesellschafter/ oder Gesprächgenossen sind/ beantworten Kan.

The manner of teaching in conversation is [...] therefore more apt than any other because many questions cannot be answered with only a yes or a no, but in as many ways as there are companions or conversational partners.<sup>56</sup>

The 'Akt gleichsam sokratischer Wahrheitssuche und Wahrheitsfindung' ('act, as it were, of the Socratic quest for truth and finding of truth')<sup>57</sup> sometimes even seems to allow for free association.<sup>58</sup> It is exactly this versatile potential that fascinated the shepherds of the Pegnitz – and thus became a basis of their concepts of *imitatio*, and, in particular, *aemulatio*.

Both concepts, *imitatio* and *aemulatio*, are re-contextualised in this specific way, as the founding myth of the literary society in *Pegnesisches Schaefergedicht* and *Fortsetzung Der Pegnitz-Schäferey* illustrates (PS 22–47 and FPS 28–33). In the first episode, the shepherds of the Pegnitz challenge Fama to select the winner of their poetry competition, but she refuses and instead hangs the laurel wreath on a tree branch. Her reserve in choosing a winner calls the nymph Echo into action in the second episode. Echo is consulted in a long dialogue,

55 Harsdörffer discusses the relation between natural and artificial (or conventional) signs, e.g., in his theory of sign language. See Locher E., "Harsdörffers Deutkunst", in Battafarano, *Georg Philipp Harsdörffer* 243–265. On the boundaries between right and wrong see also n. 47 in this paper.

56 Harsdörffer, *Frauenzimmer Gesprächspiele*, VI. Teil (1646) 104.

57 Hofmann, "Delectatio, Pan und Pegnitz" 43.

58 Breuer, "Einübung ins allegorische Verstehen" 134–135.

yet she, too, seems reluctant to give a clear answer and the shepherd Klajus considers her an incapable judge. Strephon, however, carefully considers her answers and concludes that Echo must have 'etwas anders angedeutet/ als wir begehren' ('suggested something other than what we ask for', FPS 31), meaning that she did not meet their expectations, but nevertheless provides a new and surprising alternative to the conventional options. As Strephon concludes, she has proposed the following: the victor's wreath should be divided and the flowers to be assigned to their fellow poets as individual order signs (or rather *emblemata*); on particular occasions, the wreath is to be rebound. This solution mirrors the decision-making process: it arises from a process of disintegration, misinterpretation, reconsideration and recombination [see the *emblemata* of the Society, Fig. 9.8]. Conventional custom should not simply be imitated, but rather disintegrated and recombined in situation and in dialogue; like the wreath, it should be rebound, and thus rewritten.

The dividing of the wreath into individual pieces can be paralleled to contemporary linguistic experimentation, i.e., to the play with the substance of language. As the extensive passages on the echo in Baroque poetic theory show,<sup>59</sup> working and experimenting with the raw material of language, with sound, with the rules and licenses of the technology of the echo, was an object of fascination.<sup>60</sup> The echo appears as a marker of poetic modernity. Furthermore, echo technique has, again, a metonymic relation to the interaction of *imitatio* and *aemulatio*: even though there is (usually) no phonetic difference to the initial statement, the echo's answer always contains a difference in meaning, be it due to the answer form, the recombination of the syllables into new units of meaning or the following reconsideration of the speaker.<sup>61</sup> As such, the echo

59 E.g., in poetic treatises by Martin Opitz, Philipp Zesen, Georg Philipp Harsdörffer, Justus Georg Schottelius, Georg Neumark, Sigmund von Birken, Albrecht Christian Roth and many others. On poetic echo techniques and genres in the seventeenth century, see, e.g., Berns J.J., "Die Jagd auf die Nymphe Echo. Künstliche Echoeffekte in Poesie, Musik und Architektur der frühen Neuzeit", in Möbius H. – Berns J.J. (eds.), *Die Mechanik in den Künsten. Studien zur ästhetischen Bedeutung von Naturwissenschaft und Technologie* (Marburg: 1990) 67–82; Ingen F. van, *Echo im 17. Jahrhundert. Ein literarisch-musikalisches Phänomen in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Amsterdam: 2002); Wald, "Kanon, Kombinatorik, Echokompositionen"; Schulze S., *Metamorphosen des Echos. Lektüren der gehörten Stimme in Barock, Romantik und Gegenwart* (Paderborn: 2015).

60 See, e.g., Ingen F. van, "Georg Philipp Harsdörffer und seine Experimente mit 'der Natur Sprache'", in Gerstl, *Georg Philipp Harsdörffer und die Künste* 77–88.

61 E.g., FPS 24: 'Was machet/ daß ich mehr der Orten nicht seyn will? – E. Ein Will' ('What causes me [Floridan] to not want to stay at places? – E. A will'), or, further on, on p. 30: 'Wem wird er/ wann er wird von uns entwunden/ werden? – E. bunt den Wehrten' ('To

is a paradigm of a popular Baroque challenge: to achieve a maximal change of meaning with a minimal change of material. It represents an *aemulatio* that draws on the substantive material of its objects. The play with interpretation and the production of meaning out of raw materiality leads to new, surprising and inspiring solutions.

The nymphs of the Pegnitz river elaborately demonstrate how to deal with the arts, particularly in contexts of religious education, but also in more general contexts of artistic production and reception. Teaching the right use and execution of art, the nymphs serve a virtuous purpose. Furthermore, their traditional, and in particular physical connotations are a rich source of Christological inspiration.

Sensual means, on the one hand, and the rational but cheerful dialogue, on the other hand, are shown to be favourable to moral education, since 'Das Lernen ohne Lust/ ist eine läre Last' ('Learning without pleasure is an empty burden').<sup>62</sup> This delightful goal of moral education is founded on the perception and interpretation of God's creation and its productive use in the arts.<sup>63</sup> The "natural *ornatus*" of divine creation provides symbolic value and sensual expressivity, whereas the virtuousness of the sensual is guaranteed by its symbolic value. The nymphs are a paradigm of this natural *ornatus*, due to their bucolic connotations, their elemental quality, and especially their proximity to music, which, in the seventeenth century, shows an approximation of speculative value and sense perception. Finally, they embody the expressive dimensions of the sister arts and the endeavour to intertwine poetry, music and the visual arts.

Furthermore, on a more abstract level, the nymphs in Harsdörffer's *Seelewig* build a bucolic network of interpretation. They are not only an elemental part of God's creation, but also perceive its elements and debate their moral meaning. The paradoxical juxtaposition of complex but conventional constellations of meaning and a supposedly simple, yet in its openness enigmatic natural *ornatus*, demands careful consideration. Unlike the more rigid religious education promoted in Niccolò Negri's *Favola boscareccia*, where practises like fasting

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whom will it [the wreath] belong, when it's opened up by us? – E. colourful to the worthy ones').

62 Harsdörffer, *Frauenzimmer Gesprächspiele*, II. Teil (21657) 259.

63 See Harsdörffers statement in another conversational game (*Frauenzimmer Gesprächspiele*, IV. Teil [1644] 509): 'Groß ist das Werk des HERRN/ und wer es recht bedracht/ hat Freud und Lust daran!' ('Great is the work of the Lord, and he who righteously observes it derives joy and pleasure from it!').

are recommended and the character Anima is threatened with flagellation,<sup>64</sup> Harsdörffer demonstrates in his play the educational effects of a specific type of dialogue. The bucolic nymphs represent the specifics of this ideal dialogue, which consists of a gentle, collegial and delightful colloquy, orientated towards courtly, gallant manners with playful tendencies.<sup>65</sup> The truth – or its many facets – manifests itself in the playful dialogue, which is characterized by lightness.<sup>66</sup> This lightness can be found, again, in the natural *ornatus*.<sup>67</sup> Taking into account *Seelewig's* multilayered contexts of dedication and performance and bearing in mind its differences from Cavalieri/Manni's *Rappresentatione* and Negri's *Favola*,<sup>68</sup> I would argue that Harsdörffer's play should not be seen as a spiritualised pastoral play,<sup>69</sup> but conversely as a religious play that reemphasises the bucolic for the purpose of moral education.<sup>70</sup>

Finally, the nymphs embody the concept of inspiration in general, and a specific kind of poetic *aemulatio* in particular. The raw materiality of the water nymphs, of the multisegmental *Seelewig*-nymph, but also of the talkative rock

64 The German translation of Negri's *Favola boscareccia*, *Ein gar Schön Geistliches Waldgetichte*, was probably intended for a Jesuit school theatre. See Wade, "Seelewig" 567.

65 See Krebs J.-D., "Harsdörffer als Vermittler des 'honnêteté'-Ideals", in Battafarano, *Georg Philipp Harsdörffer* 287–311.

66 Hofmann, "Delectatio, Pan und Pegnitz" 46.

67 See Harsdörffer's statement about learning, where he associates lightness with play, and play with water and sounds of nature: 'alle Sachen/ so ohne Mühe und Arbeit/ aus sonderem Belieben herfließen' ('all things that flow to us as they like, without bother and effort'), with examples of alliteration 'Spiel, fließ, zwisch, Kieß, lispeln', see Harsdörffer, *Frauenzimmer Gesprächspiele*, IV. Teil (1644) 511.

68 Dedication to Duke Augustus the Younger of Brunswick-Lüneburg/Wolfenbüttel; on the performances of *Seelewig* see Leighton J., "Die Wolfenbütteler Aufführung von Harsdörffers und Stadens *Seelewig* im Jahre 1654", *Wolfenbütteler Beiträge* 3 (1978) 115–128, and Caemmerer C., "Für erbauliche Lektüre und höfische Feste geeignet. Die Verbindung von Erbauung und Literatur in der Literatur des 17. Jahrhunderts", in Solbach, *Aedificatio* 65–76.

69 Caemmerer, "Deutsche Schäferspiele" 96. I do not agree with Caemmerer's reading of the traditional pastoral, innocent *locus amoenus* as sinful *locus terribilis* in the play *Seelewig*. However, her statement made in another contribution, qualifying *Seelewig's locus amoenus* as 'Kampfplatz des Guten und Bösen um die menschliche Seele' ('battleground of good and evil for the human soul'), is more convincing. Caemmerer, "Für erbauliche Lektüre und höfische Feste" 71.

70 Sven Havsteen points out that the supporters of Nuremberg's clerical reform were nonetheless aware of the communicative and cognitive value of the arts in public and private religious practice. Harsdörffer is a good example of the Lutherans' openness to the application of the arts as *instrumenta pietatis*. Havsteen, "Der musiktheologische Diskurs".



that Echo seems to be, calls for further investigation and experimentation, while at the same time giving substance to local identity and, above all, to the German language. The nymphs' oscillation between natural phenomena and animate and rational partners in dialogue inspires a playful, collective kind of *aemulatio* that draws on the substantive material of its objects. In order to promote the arts further, it is essential that they be broken down into their components. Similarly, the nymphs indicate differentiation and diversification in dialogue. Not a single definite judgment is important; the educational focus lies rather on establishing a careful differentiation leading to new decisions with many intensifying interpretational perspectives.

Whereas in seventeenth-century Germany a common metaphor for the topos 'ut pictura poesis' were the children or siblings of a family,<sup>71</sup> Harsdörffer usually terms the associated arts as 'sisters'.<sup>72</sup> It is no coincidence that both ideals of virtuous dialogue and collective *aemulatio* are represented by female characters. In the seventeenth century, the Pegnitz Flower Society was the only literary society in Germany that accepted female poets. The basis for this rather advanced practice, which really only gained momentum under Sigmund von Birken's influence, was Harsdörffer's reception of discussions by Italian and French scholars about women's education and women taking part in artistic, especially poetic discourses.<sup>73</sup> Derived from the aesthetics of his nymphs, this opening up, on the one hand, was owed to a generally virtuous, but also religious connotation of female allegorisation and of female aspects of the bucolic and of courtly conversation.<sup>74</sup> On the other hand, however, it can be read as the general intent to allow for various perspectives to be integrated into the processes of art and understanding.<sup>75</sup> This intellectual and social openness is illustrated in the copperplate engravings [see Fig. 9.9] of the participants in the *Frauenzimmer Gesprächspiele*: their circle always shows a

71 See Becker-Cantarino B., "Ut pictura poesis? Zu Harsdörffers Theorie der 'Bildkunst'", in Gerstl, *Georg Philipp Harsdörffer und die Künste* 9–21, here 18, and Kaminski, "'ut pictura poesis'?" 368.

72 SE 157 e.g.

73 See Battafarano, "Harsdörffers italianisierender Versuch", and Krebs, "Harsdörffer als Vermittler des 'honnêteté'-Ideals".

74 The *Ister-Nymphen* (nymphs of the Danube) surrounding Catharina Regina von Greiffenberg, a poetic but above all devotional circle of aristocratic women, even called themselves nymphs.

75 See Heinecke's statement on the credo of the new natural philosophy espoused by those surrounding Harsdörffer: 'Erkenntnis' ('insight') is 'ein fortschreitender offener Prozeß' ('a progressing open process') demanding 'gemeinsame und koordinierte Anstrengung vieler' ('the common and coordinated effort of many'). Heinecke, "Naturphilosophie" 278.

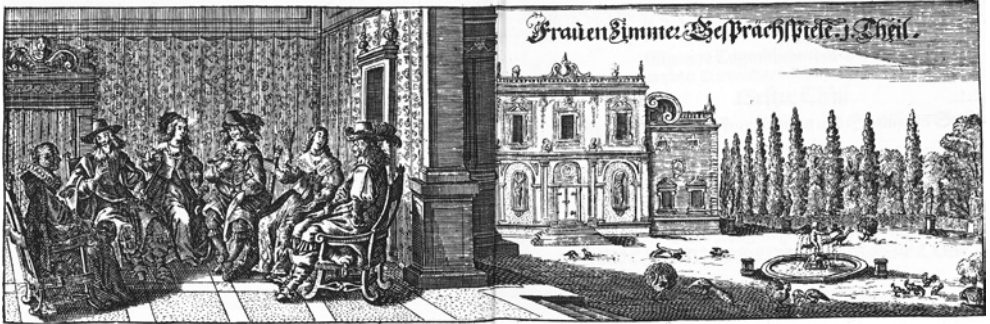


FIGURE 9.9 Initial copper engraving to Georg Philipp Harsdörffer, *Frauenzimmer Gesprächspiele*, ed. I. Böttcher, I. Teil, *Deutsche Neudrucke, Reihe Barock* 13 (Nuremberg, Wolfgang Endter: 21644; reprint, Tübingen: 1969).

gap facing the audience.<sup>76</sup> We are invited to join this ideal of interpretation,<sup>77</sup> an ideal that can only be represented as a fleeting process, a process that is, ultimately, endless.

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<sup>76</sup> See Hofmann, “Delectatio, Pan und Pegnitz” 44.

<sup>77</sup> See Breuer, “Einübung ins allegorische Verstehen” 141.

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## PART 3

### *Garden Architecture*





## The Mediality of the Nymph in the Cultural Context of Pirro Visconti's Villa at Lainate

Mira Becker-Sawatzky

In order to grasp the plurality of the conceptualisation and figuration of the nymph in different media, genres, and materials at a certain moment of time, the present paper traces nymphs within the cultural context of Pirro Visconti's villa and garden at Lainate at the turn of the sixteenth to the seventeenth century.<sup>1</sup> With its grottos and water fountains, its artworks, and a *Wunderkammer*-like collection that, together, sprang from an ambitious and versatile artistic program, this place constituted a renowned meeting point for artists and poets, but was also home to nymphs.<sup>2</sup> Nymphs were present as marble statues inside the grottos, in fresco paintings inside the villa, and as namesakes of the garden site with its different trick fountains and grottos, referred to as *ninfeo*. They were furthermore a recurrent motif in poetry, art theory, and prose texts written by members of the villa's artistic circle including Giovan Paolo Lomazzo, Francesco Brambilla, the brothers Camillo and Carlo Antonio Procaccini, Bernardo Rainoldi, and Pier Francesco Mazzucchelli aka "il Morazzone." The villa's cultural context thus offers a diversity of media and materials configuring nymphs. Within this constellation, the present paper traces the figure of the nymph – uncountable, timeless and forever in motion – in her diversity as an elusive figure, substantiated and modeled each time by the respective media and materials, thus articulating and conceptualizing different modes of female beauty.

1 I am very thankful to Marta Tramontini from the Comune di Lainate for the opportunity to study the villa and its garden at length and for providing me with useful information, including photographs.

2 Apart from the essential studies by Alessandro Morandotti, little research has been done on the villa and its artistic program. See Morandotti A., *Milano profana nell'età dei Borromeo* (Milan: 2005); Morandotti A., "Nuove tracce per il tardo Rinascimento italiano: il ninfeo-museo della Villa Borromeo, Visconti Borromeo, Litta, Toselli di Lainate", *Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa. Classe di Lettere e Filosofia* Series III, 15, 1 (1985) 129–185; here Morandotti aptly calls the villa 'una fucina, un'Accademia artistica' (162). For an overview of the building site see also: Benzo E. – Anzani A. – Pagani C., *Villa Borromeo Visconti Litta a Lainate. Arte, storia, cultura – architettura e giardini – restauro* (Lainate: 2010).



In his dialogue *La Villa*, published in Milan in 1559, Bartolomeo Taegio documents and discusses a veritable fashion of the sixteenth-century Italian courtly society: the *villa di delizie*, the villas of delight, which reinterpreted ancient traditions.<sup>3</sup> Most included large gardens with water features, fountains, and grottos. The villa of delight was conceived as a *locus amoenus*, a site for the study of literature and art, for hunting, agriculture, conviviality, and love scenes in a bucolic and pastoral tradition.<sup>4</sup> Fountains and springs of limpid water, sweetly murmuring and refreshing the senses, were a crucial motif of such a villa's garden site.<sup>5</sup> Contemporary texts discussing the idea of the *villa di delizie* constantly emphasise the limpidness of the water of the fountains and grottos and relate them to the notion of an Arcadian world inhabited by nymphs and shepherds.<sup>6</sup> In such sceneries, the nymphs guard the springs and

- 3 See Taegio Bartolomeo, *La Villa. Dialogo di M. Bartolomeo Taegio* (Milan, Francesco Moscheni: 1559). According to the character Vitavro, who dominates Taegio's dialogue, the villa was a refuge for the 'vita rusticana' *all'antica*, enabling 'huomini contemplativi' to strive for the 'ocio delle lettere,' to hunt, and to pursue the 'noble art of agriculture'. Vitavro is furthermore convinced that 'le donne di villa sono più gratiose, sincere & leali, che le cittadine' ('the women of the villas are more gracious, honest, and loyal than the women living in the cities'). See Taegio, *Villa* 27–28, 38, 120 (unless noted otherwise, all translations are mine). On the villas of delight, see also Cassanelli R., "Ville di delizia. Storia, gusto, cultura dei 'palagi camparecci' nel territorio di Milano tra tardo medioevo ed età dei lumi", in Cassanelli R. (ed.), *Ville di delizia della provincia di Milano* (Milan: 2003) 29–52; Azzi Visentini M., "Giardini di delizia nel Milanese dai Visconti alla restaurazione", in Cassanelli R. (ed.), *Ville di delizia della provincia di Milano* (Milan: 2003) 53–62.
- 4 See Cassanelli, "Ville di delizia" and Lauterbach I., "The Gardens of the Milanese 'Villeggiatura' in the Mid-Sixteenth Century", in Hunt J.D. (ed.), *The Italian Garden. Art, Design, and Culture* (Cambridge: 1996) 127–159; Battaglia Ricci L., "Gardens in Italian Literature During the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries", in Hunt J.D. (ed.), *The Italian Garden. Art, Design, and Culture* (Cambridge: 1996) 6–33.
- 5 See Comito T., "Beauty Bare: Speaking Waters and Fountains in Renaissance Literature", in MacDougall E.B. (ed.), *Fons sapientiae. Renaissance Garden Fountains* (Washington, DC: 1978) 17–58.
- 6 Taegio's Vitavro, for example, repeatedly describes the villas and their garden sites by pointing out – among other characteristics – 'la vaghezza di fiori, la vivezza de fonti, l'ombra delli boschetti, la piacevolezza delle grotte, [...] il mormorar dell'acque' ('the delightful beauty [vaghezza] of the flowers, the vividness of the springs, the shade of the groves, the pleasantness of the grottos, [...] the murmuring of the waters'), see Taegio, *Villa* 76. Furthermore, Vitavro states on the villa's delight: 'non solamente gli huomini, ma anco i Dij, et le Dee ne furono studiosissimi, come fu Bacco, Pan, Saturno, [...] Diana, Flora, [...] Satiri, Fauni, [...] Driadi, [...], Naiadi, et altre tali Deità' ('not only humans, but also the deities were studious [of the villa's delight], like Bacchus, Pan, Saturn, [...] Diana, Flora, [...] satyrs, fauns, [...] Dryads [...], Naiads, and other such deities'), see Taegio, *Villa* 58. Again and again Vitavro comments on

grottos and become an important and prominent figure within the villas' context, so that sometimes single parts if not the whole of the courtly society's recreation site became known as a *nymphaeum*. Paolo Giovio, for example, used the term *nymphaeum* to denote Ferrante Gonzaga's *Villa Simonetta* in Milan as an abode of the nymphs, and Giorgio Vasari designed a *nymphaeum* for the *Villa Giulia* in Rome.<sup>7</sup> One of the main literary sources to imagine a grotto inhabited by nymphs in Early Modern Italy was the Greek Neoplatonic philosopher Porphyry (3rd century AD) in his commentary on the thirteenth book of Homer's *Odyssey*.<sup>8</sup> Homer describes the nymphs' grotto as a lovely and murky cave, where the water flows unceasingly and which has two gates, one for the humans to descend, the other one for the deities to enter. Porphyry interprets this cave as an independent, separate nature, as a symbol of the invisible powers of matter and of the cosmic elements; within this reading, he considers the nymphs to be souls and vital spirits in charge of procreation and therefore equipped with the seductive powers of delight.<sup>9</sup> Dealing with the aesthetics of grottos, Ovid states on Diana's cave with the bathing nymphs that

[t]here was a vale in that region, thick grown with pine and cypress with their sharp needles. 'Twas called Gargaphie, the sacred haunt of high-girt Diana. In its most secret nook there was a well-shaded grotto, wrought by no artist's hand. But Nature by her own cunning had imitated art; for she had shaped a native arch of the living rock and soft tufa. A sparkling spring

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the 'fresche fontane che soavemente mormorando' ('refreshing fountains, which, sweetly murmuring') adorn the gardens (Taegio, *Villa* 90). On this point, see also Lauterbach, "The Gardens of the Milanese 'Villeggiatura'", and Pataki Z.À., *Nympha ad amoenum fontem dormiens' CIL VI/5,3. Ekphrasis oder Herrscherallegorese? Studien zu einem Nymphenbrunnen sowie zur Antikenrezeption und zur politischen Ikonographie am Hof des ungarischen Königs Matthias Corvinus* (Stuttgart: 2005) 86–108.

7 See Morandotti, "Nuove tracce per il tardo Rinascimento" 138; Cassanelli, "Ville di delizia" 33–34.

8 See the recent edition Porphyry, *L'antro delle ninfe*, ed. L. Simonini (Milan: 2006).

9 Porphyry, *L'antro delle Ninfe* 45, 47, 49, 51, and 61. E.g., 47: 'Consideravano l'antro simbolo non solo, come si è detto, del cosmo, cioè del generato e del sensibile, ma l'oscurità degli antri li indusse a vedervi il simbolo anche di tutte le potenze invisibili, la cui essenza appunto non è percepibile allo sguardo. [...] Consacravano antri alle Ninfe, soprattutto alle Naiadi, che presiedono alle fonti e prendono il nome Naiadi dalle acque da cui sgorgano le correnti.' ('They considered the grotto as a symbol not only – as outlined above – of the cosmos, in which everything is generated and perceivable, but the darkness of the grotto tempted them to also see the symbol of all the invisible powers, whose essence is not perceivable with the eyes. [...] They dedicated the grottos to the nymphs, mostly to the naiads, who chair the springs and who are named after the waters from which the rivers arise')

with its slender stream babbled on one side and widened into a pool girt with grassy banks. Here the goddess of the wild woods, when weary with the chase, was wont to bathe her maiden limbs in the crystal water.<sup>10</sup>

Referring to Homer's antique concept, and its interpretations as well as to Ovid's *imitatio* concept, the Early Modern design and perception of grottos were shaped on the one hand by the idea of the creative powers of matter and on the other by the idea of a mixture of art and nature imitating each other's *poiesis*.<sup>11</sup> Claudio Tolomei, for example, in a letter published in 1559 reflects on this mixture and the *poiesis* of grottos in his description of the renewed fashion of fountains in Rome:

[...] l'ingegnoso artificio nuovamente ritrovato di far le fonti, il qual già si vede usato in piu luoghi in Roma, ove mescolando l'arte con la natura, non si fa discernere s'ella è opera di questa o di quella; anzi hor altrui pare un natural artificio, e hora una artificiosa natura [...]. A le quali opere arrecan molto d'ornamento, e bellezza queste pietre spognose, che nascono a Tivoli, le quali essendo formate da l'acque, ritornan come lor fatture al servitio delle acque [...].

[...] the ingenious and newly regained artifice of creating fountains, which can be seen in several places in Rome, where art and nature are mixed and where it is hard to discern whether one or the other made this fountain; on the contrary, it seems at one glance natural artifice, and at another artificial nature [...]. A lot of ornament and beauty are given to these works by those spongy stones, which are born in Tivoli, and which, being formed by the water themselves, return as products of water to serve the water [...].<sup>12</sup>

10 Ovid, *Metamorphoses* III, 138–164, see here 135, 137; see the edition with an English translation by F.J. Miller, vol. I (books I–VIII), The Loeb Classical Library 42 (Cambridge, Massachusetts/London: 1977<sup>3</sup>).

11 See Rinaldi A., "Grotte domestiche nell'architettura fiorentina del '600. Dinastia e natura nella Grotta di Palazzo Giugni", in Acidini Luchinat C. (ed.), *L'arte delle grotte: per la conoscenza e la conservazione delle grotte artificiali* (Genova: 1987) 31–38.

12 Tolomeo Claudio, *De Le Lettere di M. Claudio Tolomeo. Libri sette. Con nuova aggiunta ristampate, et con somma diligenza ricorrette* (Venice, Domenico and Cornelio de' Nicolini: 1559), book II, 41–42 (letter to M. Giovambattista Grimaldi). On the link of the *poiesis* of nature to that of the grottos see Schröder G., "Metamorphosen der Skulptur: Michelangelos Sklaven und Buontalenti's Grotte", in Rosen V. von (ed.), *Erosionen der Rhetorik? Strategien der Ambiguität in den Künsten der Frühen Neuzeit* (Wiesbaden: 2012) 115–137. On the

The creative shifting between art and nature was of great interest to sixteenth-century producers and percipients, for whom the grottos and their inhabitants, the nymphs, were figures of creation and creativity. In this way, the nymphs' grottos appeared as an exploration and demonstration of the processes of creation and of license within the aesthetic and social framework of rules.<sup>13</sup> Not least, grottos were etymologically and imaginatively connected to the *cinquecento* idea of *grotteschi*, linking the ancient decorations of the subterranean *domus aurea* to the space of grottos and to figurations dealing with the metamorphic, the deformed, and the irregular.<sup>14</sup> In this discursive constellation, the villas' garden sites were designed and enjoyed as places beyond strict moral and aesthetic regulation; very prominent examples in this regard are the Boboli Gardens at the Palazzo Pitti in Florence, commissioned and owned by Eleonora of Toledo and Cosimo I de' Medici, and Pirro's villa at Lainate.<sup>15</sup>

With a profound interest and investigation into the aesthetics of the grotesque, Pirro Visconti turned his family's agricultural building site at Lainate near Milan into such a villa of delight in line with the sixteenth-century fashion of *ville di delizie* with grottos or *nymphaea*. The villa's garden site includes grottos and water features formed by a metamorphic architectural design and inhabited by nymphs. In 1589, Pirro opened the garden's gates to the public. Its caverns and fountains with their sculptural decoration quickly became one of the most popular places to visit. Federico Zuccaro, Thomaso Thomai, Vincenzo Scarmozzi, Simon Vouet, and many others came and praised the grottos and water features for their artistic ingenuity and marvelous effects.<sup>16</sup> Pirro Visconti himself was one of the wealthiest men in Spanish-ruled Milan. He was a collector of art and a member of the *Accademia della Val di Blenio*. This *accademia* was an intellectual network of artists, poets, actors, and members of other disciplines meeting regularly to celebrate artistic creativity and

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relevance of the concept of *poiesis* in the Early Modern arts see Rosen V. von, "Einleitung. Poiesis. Zum heuristischen Nutzen eines Begriffs für die Künste der Frühen Neuzeit", in Rosen V. von – Nelting D. – Steigerwald J. (eds.), *Poiesis. Praktiken der Kreativität in den Künsten der Frühen Neuzeit* (Zurich – Berlin: 2013) 9–42.

13 See Schröder, "Metamorphosen der Skulptur".

14 See Becker M., "'Grottesco' & 'suavitas'. Zur Kopplung von ästhetischem Programm und institutioneller Form in zwei Mailänder Kunstakademien der Frühen Neuzeit", in Cancik-Kirschbaum E. – Traninger A. (eds.), *Wissen in Bewegung. Institution – Iteration – Transfer* (Wiesbaden: 2015) 415–440.

15 See Schröder, "Metamorphosen der Skulptur".

16 See Morandotti, "Nuove tracce per il tardo Rinascimento" 162–163; Morandotti, *Milano profana* 39; Tomai Tommaso, *Idea del giardino del mondo* (Milan, Pacifico Pontio: 1589).

*furor*.<sup>17</sup> They spoke in dialect and played with the deformation of forms and the deviation from rules – in drawings, poems, and the design of the Lainate grottos.<sup>18</sup> In this way, the members of the *accademia* explored and conceptualised a grotesque aesthetic that chafed at the normative framework of the Early Modern aesthetics of imitation on one hand and on the other at the normative framework of the rigid Catholic reform policies of the Milanese diocese under the rule of Carlo, and later Federico Borromeo. In the academy's publication, *Rabisch* (1589), several poems and laudations deal with Pirro and with his villa, its grottos, and the figure of the nymph.<sup>19</sup> Thus within this cultural context and within Pirro's villa and its garden sites themselves, nymphs appear in different media and materials. To elaborate on these figurations of the nymph and to explore their common ground as well as their differences, the present paper first focuses on the nymphs hewn from marble and placed within the grottos at Lainate. I then reflect on the poetic and on the art-theoretical figuring of nymphs in different text genres and written by members of the *Accademia della Val di Blenio*, for whom the villa most likely constituted a veritable artistic and intellectual meeting place. To conclude the discussion of the nymph's mediality in the cultural context of Pirro Visconti's villa, I discuss the figure of the nymph painted on the walls of a stateroom-like hall inside the villa itself.

From the side entrance of Pirro's estate, situated behind the stately main building and leading directly into the garden, the Early Modern visitors approached a rectangular building symmetrically structured with a slightly ornamented façade.<sup>20</sup> Through an arch at the center of the façade they stepped into an octagonal hall, still in use today [Figs. 10.1 and 10.2].<sup>21</sup> This hall is made of tuff, stalactite, stalagmite, shells, pebbles, and shingles, creating niches for statues of stucco and of bronze on two levels. There are statues personifying the seasons, the winds, Venus, and Mercury.<sup>22</sup> Water could unexpectedly splash out of several little tubes hidden in the floor, in the walls, and in the ceiling

17 See Morandotti, *Milano profana* 13ff. and Becker, "'Grottesco' & 'suavitas'", also for further secondary literature.

18 See ibidem; for a critical edition of the academy's publication, see Dante Isella's edition: Lomazzo Giovan Paolo – I Facchini della Val di Blenio (eds.), *Rabisch*, ed. and trans. D. Isella (Turin: 1993).

19 See notes 42–44, 47–50.

20 The sixteenth-century façade is now lost due to renovations during the *settecento*.

21 The octagonal floor plan takes up a well-established model, also present, e.g., at the grotto of the Palazzo Te in Mantua, see Belluzzi A., "La Grotta di Palazzo Te a Mantova", in Acidini Luchinat C. (ed.), *L'arte delle grotte: per la conoscenza e la conservazione delle grotte artificiali* (Genova: 1987) 49–53.

22 Morandotti, *Milano profana* 42–44.



FIGURE 10.1 *Entrance hall of the Nymphaeum. Lainate, Villa Visconti Borromeo Litta.*



FIGURE 10.2 *Venus and Cupid in the entrance hall of the Nymphaeum (1587–1589). Stucco after the design and drawings by Francesco Brambilla. Lainate, Villa Visconti Borromeo Litta, Nymphaeum.*

[Fig. 10.1]. Passing through the door under Venus, Cupid, and a dolphin, the visitors would wander down galleries covered by pebble stones laid in ornamental structures in black and white and vaulted by mosaics painted with tempera depicting hybrid creatures like centaurs and related motifs of a fantastic, fairytale-like imagery [Figs. 10.2–10.4]. Framed by this grotesque aesthetic, visitors could marvel at the display of Pirro Visconti's collection of sacral and profane paintings by Antonio Correggio, Bronzino, Camillo Boccacino, and others, and at casts of ancient statues like the *Venus Callipigia*, and other objects like fossils and mechanical instruments [Fig. 10.4].<sup>23</sup> The public display of paintings and sculptures in the vaulted and decorated galleries constituted a sort of museum, mixing objects of art and nature and thereby presenting itself as a kind

23 Ibidem 13–14, 21, 234–243.



FIGURE 10.3 *Grotesques (1587–1589). Mosaic made of painted pebbles, designed and painted by Camillo Procaccini. Lainate, Villa Visconti Borromeo Litta, gallery hall of the Nymphaeum.*



FIGURE 10.4 *Part of the gallery hall of the Nymphaeum. Lainate, Villa Visconti Borromeo Litta.*

of *Wunderkammer*. Once the visitors had passed this well-ordered display of the curiously mixed Visconti collection, they entered a two-gated labyrinth of rocky caverns illuminated by the changing daylight coming through holes in the ceiling, which created an ongoing alternation between light and shade and enlivened the grotto site with all its nooks and crannies. Meanwhile, water sparkled everywhere and rain could find its way in. Even today one is surprised by this theatrical and adventurous play of water and illumination while wandering through the grotto and passing its ponds and water ditches that branch out in different directions and encircle niches of tuff stone and stalagmite. In accordance with the Early Modern concept of the grotto, the Lainate caverns offer the opportunity to explore and imitate nature's *poiesis*, incessantly changing and seemingly disordered, demonstrating creativity and generating excitement. Placed within this mysterious atmosphere of the shady and winding caverns are several statues carved in white marble. There are two putti – one wrestling with a marine monster and another with a dragon –, a flute-playing satyr, and three bathing female figures [Figs. 10.5–9].<sup>24</sup>

24 While the marble statues of the women and the putti date from the late sixteenth century, the statue of the satyr was sculpted several decades later.



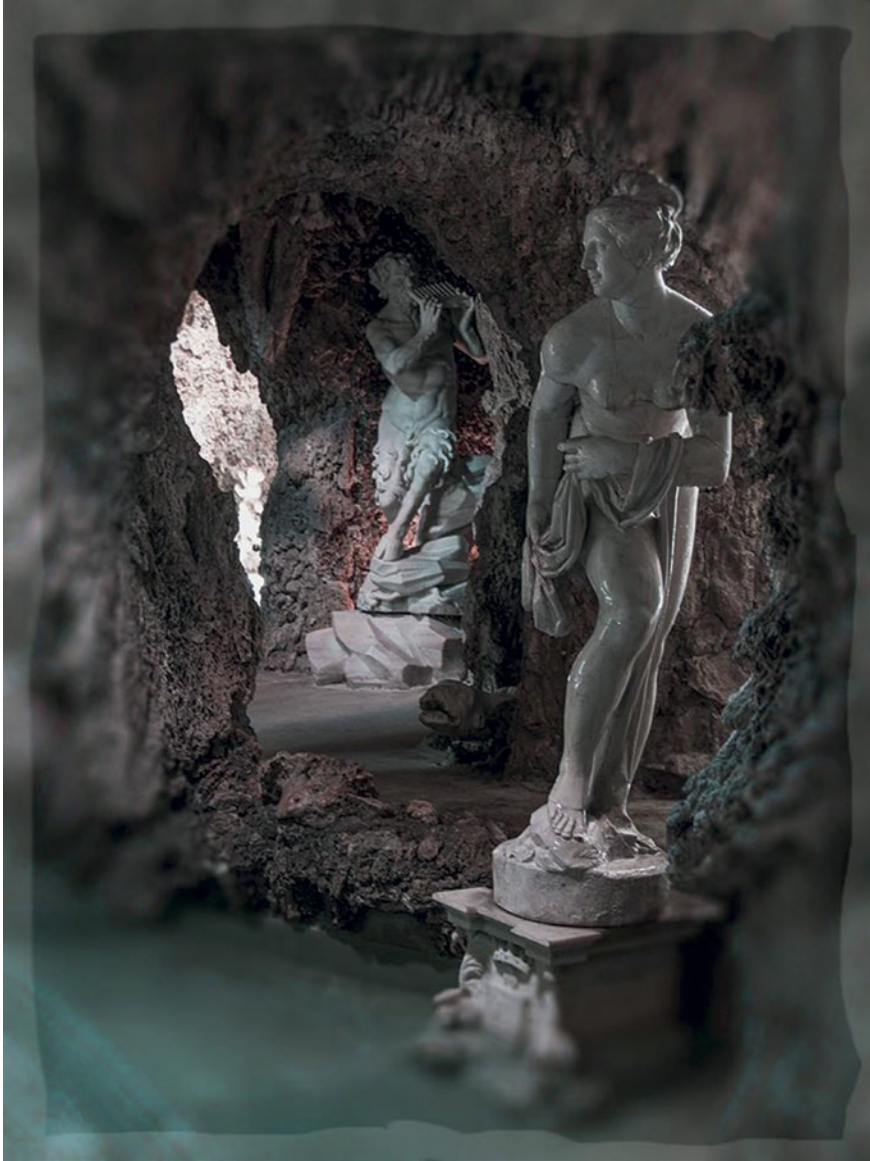


FIGURE 10.5 *Antonio Prestinari (attributed) after the design of Francesco Brambilla (attributed), Bathing Nymph (ca. 1589). White marble. Lainate, Villa Visconti Borromeo Litta, Grottos of the Nymphaeum.*





FIGURE 10.6 *Antonio Prestinari (attributed) after the design of Francesco Brambilla (attributed), Bathing Nymph (ca. 1589). White marble. Lainate, Villa Visconti Borromeo Litta, Grottos of the Nymphaeum. Detail.*



FIGURE 10.7 *Antonio Prestinari (attributed) after the design of Francesco Brambilla (attributed), Bathing Nymph (ca. 1589). White marble. Lainate, Villa Visconti Borromeo Litta, Grottos of the Nymphaeum.*

The three female figures are separately framed by an arched niche of tuff, stalactite, and shells, encircled by water, and placed in the middle of a pond. In this way, they are out of the visitors' reach, yet within their sight. One can follow the stony paths going around their little grotto compartments partitioned by the ditches. Wandering down the winding paths, one can look at the marble figures from different perspectives and peek through holes in the stony structure of the grotto's architecture, catching glimpses of the naked bathing women. Bright white marble materialises the three nudes. The marble's treatment and surface structure subtly differentiates between the evoking of skin, the modeling of the women's curly, pinned-up hair, and the drapery in their hands. Due to the grotto's humidity and the water dripping or even splashing



FIGURE 10.8

*Giulio Cesare Procaccini after the design of Francesco Brambilla, Bathing Nymph (1588–1589). White marble. Lainate, Villa Visconti Borromeo Litta, Grottos of the Nymphaeum.*



FIGURE 10.9

*Giulio Cesare Procaccini after the design of Francesco Brambilla, Bathing Nymph (1588–1589). White marble. Lainate, Villa Visconti Borromeo Litta, Grottos of the Nymphaeum.*

out of the different hidden tubes, fountain structures, and holes in the ceiling, the marble figures' 'skin' acquires a glossy and soft texture contrasting the rough and grainy surface of the grotto's stones [Figs. 10.5 and 10.6]. White bright marble was in general the favoured material for fountains and their decorations in this period, not least because its materiality evoked the aesthetics of limpid water and of foam:

[...] da una fontana di bianchissimo marmo sorge acqua chiarissima, che con si grato susurro va scorrendo per dentro dell'amenissimo boschetto, che accordandosi con lui il mormorar della dolce aura, et il cantar de gli uccelletti ne riesce una armonia, che l'aria addolcisce di maniera, ch'ivi mai non s'invecchia: Delle quali gratie e privilegi le vaghe Driade accompagnate da i lor selvaggi Dij mostrano aperti segni di allegrezza, empiendo con boscarecci canti il cielo [...].

[...] from a fountain made of bright white marble rises very clear water that runs through the very pleasant grove with a gracious whispering, joining in harmony the sweet breeze's murmuring and the birds' singing, sweetening the air in such a way that no one ever ages here: thanks to these graces and privileges the charming dryads accompanied by their savage gods show clear signs of cheerfulness, filling the heavens with their echoing singing [...].<sup>25</sup>

Similarly, the three marble nudes at Lainate play with the aesthetics and semantics of the limpid water, its reflections, brightness, purity, and sensuality. Standing by the water in the grottos' springs, bare of any iconographic attributes apart from their drapery, the three nudes seem to be bathing, or to be drying their glossy marble skin with the drapery. They inhabit the caverns and guard them. This way, they appear as nymphs, or more precisely Naiads, who typically live in the rivers and springs of grottos. One of them stands with her right foot on top of a little rock, leaning forward, bending to her right [Figs. 10.5–7].

25 See Taegio, *La Villa* 101–102; on this point, see also Lomazzo's *Trattato*: Lomazzo Giovan Paolo, *Scritti sulle arti*, ed. R.P. Ciardi, vol. 2 (Florence: 1975) 512, 516: in this chapter on the nymphs, Lomazzo states on whiteness: 'la bianchezza che nasce dalla spuma del mare' ('The whiteness that comes from sea foam'); 'ragionando Pausania dell'Arcadia, scrive che in certa parte di quel paese sono alcune statue de più nobili e più celebrati fiumi da gl'antichi, tutte di bianchissimo marmo' ('Pausanias, talking about Arcadia, writes that in certain parts of this land there are some statues of the rivers that were the most noble and celebrated ones among the ancients, all made of the whitest marble').



Slightly smiling she looks straight ahead with her pupils precisely carved into the stone, fixing the person opposite to her with her gaze. Her hair is tidily and elegantly pinned back. Her drapery artfully coils up around her left arm. Her right hand wraps up one end of the cloth, while the textile's other end falls to the ground. With this appearance of momentariness, the nymph seems to be caught in the act of drying her legs. Meanwhile, her posture is perfectly balanced and shows a highly elegant and agile body twisting in a somewhat timeless beauty.

Another of the three marble nymphs is standing on the balls of her feet, slightly bending forward, on the verge of tripping, turning her head to the right, somewhat looking downward [Fig. 10.8]. Strands of hair fall onto her right shoulder. With the long, elegantly spread fingers of her left hand, she holds the drapery. With the other hand, she seems to be using the cloth to dry her skin. Her eyes of pure white stone appear to be following any beholder passing in front of her. Her face, arms, legs, and upper and lower body are rotated in opposite directions around the central axis, delineated by the drapery and creating a reinforced contrapposto with a spiral movement. With this elegant twist and her body's proportions, anatomy and soft texture, this nude woman bears a close relation to Leonardo's invention of *Leda* taken up by many Lombard artists, as for example by Giampietrino in his painting of *Venus* [Fig. 10.10]. Giovan Paolo Lomazzo, leader of the *Accademia della Val di Blenio* and a friend of Pirro's who was involved in the design of the Lainate project, reflected in his *Trattato dell'arte della pittura, scoltura ed architettura* (1584) on such a configuration of a spiral body twist in painting, calling it *figura piramidale, serpentinata*:

[I]n questo precetto parmi che consista tutto il secreto de la pittura, imperocché la maggior grazia e leggiadria che possa avere una figura è che mostri di muoversi, il che chiamano i pittori furia de la figura. E per rappresentare questo moto non vi è forma più accomodata che quella de la fiamma del foco la quale, secondo che dicono Aristotele e tutti i filosofi, è elemento più attivo di tutti e la forma de la sua fiamma è più atta al moto di tutte, perché ha il cono e la punta acuta con la quale par che voglia romper l'aria et ascendere a la sua sfera, sí che quando la figura averà questa forma sarà bellissima. [...] e questa [figura di fiamma di foco] chiama Michel Angelo serpentinata che rappresenta la tortuosità d'una serpe viva quando camina, che è la propria forma de la fiamma del foco che ondeggia. Il che vuol dire che la figura ha di rappresentare la forma de la lettera S [...].

I think that the whole secret of painting consists of this rule, because a figure acquires the highest level of grace and loveliness if it appears to be in motion, which painters call the figure's fury. And to represent this motion, no figuration is more apt than that of the flame of fire, which, according to Aristotle and all philosophers, is the most active element of all and the form of whose flame is the most suited for movements, because the angle of its cone and point are acute and appear to be aiming at breaking the air and at ascending to its sphere, in a way that every figure that has this form is most beautiful. [...] and Michelangelo calls this [the figure in the form of the flame of fire] serpentine as it represents the tortuousness of a living snake when it moves, which is the typical form of the flame of fire that ripples. This means that the figure has to represent the form of the letter S [...].<sup>26</sup>

On top of a fountain in one of the grottos of the Boboli gardens in Florence, the Early Modern beholder could study and marvel at another interpretation of the serpentine line carved in white marble and staged in a context very similar to that of the marble nude in the grottos of Lainate: Giambologna's *Bathing Woman*, or *Venus* [Fig. 10.11]. Giambologna modeled the marble nude's flame-like twist with highly elegant, elongated forms, such as the woman's neck and legs, mirrored in the elongated, curved vase on which the nude

26 See Lomazzo, *Scritti sulle arti* vol. 2, 29–30 (trans. M. Becker-Sawatzky). Lomazzo's explications adopt ideas from Leon Battista Alberti's *Della pittura* (1435), which compares the seven movements of hair with flames as they move in a delightful and graceful manner, see Alberti Leon Battista, *Della pittura – Über die Malkunst*, ed. O. Bätschmann – S. Gianfreda (Darmstadt: 2010) 138; cf. also Warburg A., "Sandro Botticellis 'Geburt der Venus' und 'Frühling'. Eine Untersuchung über die Vorstellungen von der Antike in der italienischen Frührenaissance", in Warburg A., *Werke in einem Band. Auf der Grundlage der Manuskripte und Handexemplare*, ed. and comm. M. Treml – S. Weigel – P. Ladwig (Berlin: 2010) 39–123, here 47. On the sculptural explorations of the *figura serpentinata* in marble during mannerism, see Schröder G., "Versteinernder Blick und entflammte Begierde. Giambolognas 'Raub der Sabinerin' im Spannungsfeld poetisch reflektierter Wirkungsästhetik und narrativer Semantik", *Marburger Jahrbuch für Kunstwissenschaft* 31 (2004) 175–204, in particular 190–191. For a critical and thorough discussion of Lomazzo's concept of the *figura serpentinata* and his reference to Michelangelo as well as of the relation between the theoretical conception and the artistic practice of serpentine twists in artworks from the late fifteenth to the late sixteenth century in Italy, mainly Lombardy, see Becker-Sawatzky M., *Zwischen scientia & vaghezza – Texte zur Malerei und ihr Verhältnis zur bildkünstlerischen Praxis in der Lombardei des Cinquecento. Fallstudien zu Formen elusiven Wissens im ästhetischen Diskurs* (PhD dissertation: Freie Universität Berlin, 2017) ch. 3.



FIGURE 10.10 *Gian Pietro Rizzi (Giampietrino), Venus and Cupid (ca. 1530–1535). Oil on panel, 112 × 60 cm. Milan, private collection.*



FIGURE 10.11 *Giovanni Bologna (Giambologna), Venus Emerging From Her Bath (end of 1590s). White marble. Florence, Giardino di Boboli, Grotta del Buontalenti.*

supports herself.<sup>27</sup> Thus the artist presented the idealised mannerist female beauty with oblong limbs in a delicate move along a serpentine line. A crucial part of this code of female beauty during the *cinquecento* is the reference to the ancient marble statues of Venus that were present in many prominent Italian art collections; among them were the *Venus Medici* or the *Capitoline Venus*. Besides the serpentine line there is another detail in Giambologna's

27 On the mannerist elongated forms created to represent female beauty, see Cropper E., "On Beautiful Women, Parmigianino, Petrarchismo, and the Vernacular Style", *Art Bulletin* 58, 3 (1976) 374–394. In a way that is applicable to Giambologna's *Venus* supporting herself with an elegantly curved long vase, Cropper underlines in her study the formal analogy between elegantly elongated forms of ideal female beauties and the ideally formed ancient vases. Cropper states that certain types of well-proportioned, symmetrical, and eurythmic ancient vases offered a figural model for female beauty, evident in works by Parmigianino and others, and discussed in contemporary literature, such as Agnolo Firenzuola's *Dialogo delle bellezze delle donne* (1548).

*Bathing Woman* or *Venus* that is intriguing for the analysis of the marble nudes at Lainate: there are male figures pulling themselves up on each outer side of the basin in order to catch a glimpse of the beautiful nude bathing in the middle of Giambologna's fountain. The male figures are slightly grotesque in their portraiture, with their eyes and mouths wide open in awe and amazement. Their behavior of encircling the graceful nude with their glances (while she remains out of their reach) and of marveling at the beautiful woman bathing resembles the visitors at Lainate themselves wandering down the paths of the grotto and gazing at three beautiful nude nymphs from various perspectives.

Pirro's art collection included, furthermore, a beautiful female figure in bronze corresponding to the second marble nude at Lainate with its serpentine twist [Fig. 10.8]. Unlike the marble nude, the bronze nude is laterally reversed and without companions. In her left she holds a bundle of drapery and in her right a seashell. In the villa's historical inventories, as well as in today's catalogues, this bronze is called *Venus*.<sup>28</sup> Juxtaposing the marble nymph with the bronze *Venus* and Giambologna's *Bathing Woman* in the Boboli gardens it becomes evident that the *figura serpentinata* of the elegantly beautiful female nude does not identify one specific mythological character, but rather a figural knowledge of female beauty applicable to somewhat interwoven characters. Shifting in their artistic elaboration between the portrait of a single Venus and the configuration of numerous nymphs, it is the figures' concrete context that ultimately defines them. There is the single Venus in Giambologna's fountain or in bronze in Pirro's art collection; and there are the three marble nymphs bathing in their caverns at Lainate. This discursive constellation is further demonstrated by the third marble nymph at Lainate [Fig. 10.9]. Standing upright with her head only very slightly bowed, she presents herself full face without bending to the side. In a slight contrapposto she seems to be stepping forward on the winding path towards the visitor, directly looking at him/her with her evenly proportioned face, which is framed by her parted, curly hair, decoratively arranged with some curls falling loosely onto her shoulders. Her left hand clasps a bundle of cloth to her naked chest. Her right hand gives the impression of elegantly drawing a long drapery behind her. With her posture and her well-proportioned youthful feminine curves, this nymph is in dialogue with yet another *Venus*: the one in the octagonal entrance hall of the galleries and grottos. Positioned upon the entrance door, this Venus can be identified by Cupid and the dolphin accompanying her. She is made of patinated stucco and therefore fuses with the structure of the rocky walls [Fig. 10.2].

The visually evoked connection to the figure of Venus is not the only association created by the marble nymphs' aesthetics. As three beautiful, nude,

28 See Morandotti, "Nuove tracce" 174–185.



female figures, the marble statues of the grottos also connect to the three Graces – companions of Venus, embodiments of beauty, chastity, and grace.<sup>29</sup> Antonio da Correggio's fresco depicting the *Three Graces* in one of the lunettes of the *Camera di San Paolo* at the convent of San Paolo in Parma is particularly intriguing [Fig. 10.12].<sup>30</sup> Correggio painted the three nudes representing the Graces in scales of grey tones with very subtle accents of golden brown. Modeled thus almost monochromatically with light and shade, the fresco plays with the aesthetics and effects of grisailles. Placed below the colorfully painted vault of the ceiling, and framed by illusionistic decorations, the monochrome painted lunettes contrast with the colorful decoration parts and mimic at first sight a sculptural figuration made of a bright stone, like white marble. At second glance, one notices and admires the delicate way in which the women's arms are entangled with each other and the way in which their long curly hair seems to be flying gracefully in the breeze. The shimmer of the golden brown accentuates the implied movement. All three appear to be in motion, stepping forward in a round dance. Each one is bending in different directions, while they hold each other's arms in concord. Showing one frontally, the middle one backwards, and the right one sideways, the painting offers multiple views of the female figure in one frame. Meanwhile, the different views represent different directions portraying the Graces' acts of returning, giving, and receiving – the three acts of liberality in a circular dance as conceptualised by Seneca.<sup>31</sup>

Evoking associations of Venus and the Graces, the figures of the nymphs at Lainate are characterised by a certain versatility. In his encyclopedic reference work *Immagini degli déi*, Vincenzo Cartari had already reflected on the ambiguity of the term “nymph” several years before the Lainate project was designed.<sup>32</sup> In her monographic study on nymphs, Jennifer Larson also emphasises the nymphs' ambiguity, aptly underlining the striking correspondence between the iconography of the Graces and that of the nymphs, accentuating at the same time, though, that the nymphs are the ones with a clear sensual, sexual

29 On the Graces in general, see Mertens V., *Die drei Grazien. Studien zu einem Bildmotiv in der Kunst der Neuzeit* (Wiesbaden: 1994); Wind E., *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance. An Exploration of Philosophical and Mystical Sources of Iconography in Renaissance Art* (New York: 1968) 26–35.

30 On Correggio's fresco at Parma, see Wind, *Pagan Mysteries* 33; and in general Chiusa M.C., “Per una nuova lettura degli affreschi del Correggio”, *Artibus et Historiae* 31, 62 (2010) 45–67; Fornari Schianchi L., *Correggio* (Milan: 1994) 22–29; Ventura L., *Correggio* (Milan: 2007) 17–18.

31 See Mertens, *Die drei Grazien*.

32 See Cartari Vincenzo, *Le immagini degli déi di Vincenzo Cartari*, ed. C. Volpi (Rome: 1996) 284–300.



FIGURE 10.12 Antonio Allegri da Correggio (*il Correggio*), Lunette with the Three Graces (1519). Fresco. Parma, Convent of San Paolo.

aura which is absent in the semantic of the Graces.<sup>33</sup> Whereas the Graces' profile seems informed by a stronger ethical connotation, the nymphs seem much more interwoven with their surroundings. In the case of the fountain, springs, and grottos at Lainate, the female nudes appear as Naiads. They are fashioned as a triplet, beautiful, bending and twisting in a serpentine line, and are bright white, shimmering – comparable to the Graces, such as those painted by Correggio. But the marble nymphs at Lainate are at the same time separated from each other, they are neither dancing nor embracing each other, but are bathing in the grotto's ponds and present first of all their corporeal beauty and sensuality. Seeing the nymphs from different perspectives, while following the winding path leading through the grotto site, the visitors at Lainate can perceive the beautiful young women in different movements, with different gazes and in various constellations. With the grotto's niches and trick fountains, as well as with the statue of the satyr, the scenery creates a network of details from different stories starring nymphs found in ancient and Early Modern texts. One might think of Echo, who was turned into stone leaving only her voice resounding in the caverns; or of the satyr who was stalking a nymph; or else of the nymph Aegle who teased a sleeping satyr until he started dancing

33 See Larson J., *Greek Nymphs: Myth, Cult, Lore* (Oxford: 2001).

and playing the flute.<sup>34</sup> While the grotto and its trick fountains represent the *poietics* of nature, the marble statues of the nymphs provoke a discussion of classical standards of art, of prototypes elaborated by the visual arts tradition. In the actual grotto, the beautiful young female nudes are nymphs; would their ideally shaped silhouettes be transferred into a different context and into a different material, they could easily turn into Venus, the Graces, or, in a general sense, bathing women. However, surrounded by the grotto's tuff stone, under the dripping water, and carved in bright white marble closely connected to the semantics and aesthetics of the limpid fountain water, they are three of mythology's innumerable, timeless nymphs ambiguously situated between deities and humans, between fluid water and fleshy beautiful bodies, between lascivious smiles and shy gazes, between sexuality and chastity. This ambiguity appears to be their characteristic feature, as they are the wandering, amoral figures connected to metamorphoses in grottos. These nymphs seem to have little to do with Warburg's *ninfa fiorentina* derived from a pagan Roman maiden in motion, entering sacral and profane *istorie* of the Renaissance, draped in stylised folded veils, which fluttered in a wisp of wind together with curled hair.<sup>35</sup> As a sign, or rather a personification of vividness and intensity, a *bewegtes Beiwerk*, Warburg's *ninfa* is a formal, structural figure, detached from the history and thematic implications of the mythological nymph. In line with this concept, Georges Didi-Huberman writes of the figure of the nymph:

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- 34 See Göttler C., "‘Bootsicheyt’: Malerei, Mythologie und Alchemie im Antwerpen des frühen 17. Jahrhundert: Zu Rubens' Silen in der Gemäldegalerie der Akademie der Bildenden Künste in Wien", in von Rosen V. (ed.), *Erosionen der Rhetorik? Strategien der Ambiguität in den Künsten der Frühen Neuzeit* (Wiesbaden: 2012) 259–293, esp. 281ff.; Lauterbach, "The Gardens of the Milanese 'Villeggiatura' in the Mid-Sixteenth Century" 135; Cranston J., "The Disordered Bed in the *Sleeping Venus*", in Rath M. – Trempler J. – Wenderholm I. (eds.), *Das haptische Bild. Körperhafte Bilderfahrung in der Neuzeit* (Berlin: 2013) 31–49, esp. 34–35.
- 35 See Warburg A., "Ninfa fiorentina. Fragmente zum Nymphenprojekt", in Warburg A., *Werke in einem Band. Auf der Grundlage der Manuskripte und Handexemplare*, ed. and comm. M. Treml – S. Weigel – P. Ladwig (Berlin: 2010) 198–210; Warburg A., "Florentinische Wirklichkeit und antikisierender Idealismus", in Warburg A., *Werke in einem Band. Auf der Grundlage der Manuskripte und Handexemplare*, ed. and comm. M. Treml – S. Weigel – P. Ladwig (Berlin: 2010) 211–233, esp. 226–228. See for reflections on Warburg's *ninfa*: Didi-Huberman G., "Bewegende Bewegungen. Die Schleier der 'Ninfa' nach Aby Warburg", in Endres J. – Wittmann B. – Wolf G. (eds.), *Ikonologie des Zwischenraums. Der Schleier als Medium und Metapher* (Munich: 2005) 331–360, esp. 347–348. On Warburg's *ninfa* and the 'fall of her drapery' during the nymph's Early Modern transformation, see Didi-Huberman G., *Ninfa moderna. Über den Fall des Faltenwurfs* (Zurich: 2006) 11–27.

[...] 'Ninfa': nicht nur eine ikonographische Formel 'all'antica', sondern eine Intensitätsformel, die im Kunstwerk die Fähigkeit des Lebens zur Bewegung und zum Bewegtwerden sichtbar macht.

[...] 'Ninfa', not only an iconographic formula all'antica but a formula of intensity, which is able to make appear in a work of art all what was moving and stirring in life.<sup>36</sup>

At Lainate, the allegorical figures of the seasons and winds with their floating steps and draperies placed on the walls of the octagonal entrance hall of the galleries and grottos come closer to Warburg's notion of *ninfa* than the nymphs in the caverns [Fig. 10.2]. The latter are nymphs, or more precisely Naiads, because of their setting in the water, because of the wet, shimmery white marble, and their constellation as community, although they do not embrace each other. Once isolated from its original context, their figurative form becomes ambiguous in its semantics as it portrays an idealised type of female beauty, evoking references to antique sculptures, to the mannerist concept of the *figura serpentinata*, and demonstrating artistic virtuosity. The Lainate marble statues are defined by the absence of telling attributes. They privilege pose and type over narrative, and they challenge the viewers to discuss and reflect on their medium and iconography. Thus they are comparable to certain statues by Giambologna, which Michael Cole refers to as 'sculptures with no name.'<sup>37</sup> In this way, Giambologna's nude in the fountain of the Boboli gardens can either represent Venus or simply a bathing woman.

The nymphs of the Lainate grotto have been in situ from the beginning; they were made for this setting and are the only large-scale statues in marble in the whole project. Giulio Cesare Procaccini and Antonio Prestinari presumably carved them after models by Francesco Brambilla.<sup>38</sup> The ambiguity inherent in the nymphs' palimpsest-like figuration, whose beauty shares characteristics of the three Graces and of Venus, is also retraceable in the villa's inventories. Here the three female nudes in the grottos are once described as 'three female statues of white marble,' another time as 'Naiads,' and in a later inventory of 1837 as 'Venus figures.'<sup>39</sup> This semantic and aesthetic shifting between these

36 See Didi-Huberman, "Bewegende Bewegungen" 343 (trans. Agata Chrzanowska in her contribution in this volume).

37 See Cole M., "Giambologna and the Sculpture with No Name", *Oxford Art Journal* 31, 3 (2008) 337–360.

38 See Morandotti, *Milano profana* 238–241.

39 See Morandotti, "Nuove tracce".

prominent female characters can be found not only in the visual arts, but also in literary texts affiliated with Pirro's artistic circle, especially in several poems written by members of the *Accademia Della Val di Blenio*. These poems were published in *Rabisch*, printed in 1589, the same year in which Pirro inaugurated his villa, garden, and grottos at Lainate. *Rabisch* included the academy's statutes and an anthology of poems dedicated to Pirro Visconti. As indicated at the beginning of this article, the academy's program and practice of a grotesque aesthetic is reflected in Pirro's villa and garden site.<sup>40</sup> Some of the artists of the *Accademia* were even directly involved in the villa's artistic program. Alessandro Morandotti therefore calls *Rabisch* the literary counterpart of the villa's figurative culture.<sup>41</sup> An example of this interaction between text and building site is a poem by Bernardo Rainoldi included in *Rabisch*, which is written in the academy's artful dialect and is in praise of Pirro. The poem tells the story of three women falling into a Milanese ditch and being saved by Pirro himself, as indicated by the title: "Canzogn in ròd dor illust. Sig. Cont Pirr Moscont par r'agliutt ch'or dè a cogl' dònna ch'eran cascò in dor fòss, dor compà Slurigliagn dra Vall de Bregna" ("Canzone in praise of the illustrious count Pirro Visconti who saved the women who had fallen into a ditch, written by the comrade Slurigliagn [Rainoldi's academic name] of the Blenio valley").<sup>42</sup> As usual in *Rabisch*, the poem is full of vulgar expressions, carnevalesque inversions, and ironic comments on the established aesthetic and ethical norms.

The poem's story and choice of words can be paraphrased as follows: the three women, treats more appetizing than fish, fell into the Milanese ditch Martesano. They descended from heavenly rivers, but were made of flesh and bones, with heads, asses, legs, and feet like the spectators' and author's own women. They would have died if one of the richest and bravest fishermen, full of courage and not afraid to wet his bum, had not saved them. Among the spectators, there was one person who called the three women nymphs. Others called them Venus, Pallas, and Juno, because they resembled these figures and could stand comparison with them. Another person remarked however, that the women certainly were the three Graces who had fallen into Jupiter's disgrace, master of the graces. Unable to attain even a little of their grace, he

40 For an extended analysis of the grotesque in the aesthetic discourse of sixteenth century Lombardy and of the interactions between poetry, the visual arts, and art theory see Becker-Sawatzky, *Zwischen scientia & vaghezza* ch. 4.

41 See Morandotti, *Milano profana* 16; and also Cassanelli, "Ville di delizia" 40–41.

42 See Rainoldi's poem in Lomazzo – I Facchini della Val di Blenio (eds.), *Rabisch*, poem no. 52, 238–242.

inflicted disgrace upon the graces. But the great Pirro pulled them out of this disgrace to gain their grace himself. However, exhausted from all the laughter and baying, I (Rainoldi) tell you it is all yap. And to say it how it really is, they are three beautiful women shining like stars and so the Count (Pirro) naturally went and saved them as if they were his sisters or other relatives.<sup>43</sup>

First, the poem ironically introduces three female figures, made of flesh and bone – like average worldly women – only to then characterise them as demigoddesses, as they are said to have risen from heavenly rivers. Then the poem cites different opinions of the scenario's spectators who try to identify the three with mythologically significant figures. Thus the poem wittily deals with the iconographic ambiguity or even blurring of the figures of the nymphs with those of Venus, Pallas, Juno, and the Graces. The poem finally comments on these figures, all embodiments of female beauty, by reducing the moral as well as aesthetic category of grace to absurdity. This absurdity is poetically evoked by the end of each verse, varying the category of gracious and disgraceful (paraphrased above) in the words of the academy's rural dialect: 'gracigl', 'desgracigl':

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43 Ibidem, poem no. 52, 238–242, esp. 241–242. This is Dante Isella's Italian translation of the original text, which was written in the academy's dialect: 'Canzone in lode dell'Illustre Signor Conte Pirro Visconti, per l'aiuto che diede a quelle Signore che erano cascade nel fosso, del Compare Giuliano della Valle di Blenio. [...] in un fontanile [...] scorrente intorno a Milano e chiamato il Martesano, si videro il giorno di Sant'Angelo certi bocconi di donne più appetitosi che le trote e gli storioni. Perciò uno dei più ricchi e bravi pescatori, che non ha paura delle bisce perché ne ha egli stesso in casa, e neppure dell'acqua, andò presto per amor loro a pescarle, facendo invidia a certi altri giovani muschiati, timorosi più che lui o di annegare o di bagnarsi il culo. Ma poiché non erano abituate a stare in questo fosso, pur essendo forse discese dal fiume celeste, perché fatte di carne e ossa con testa, culo, gambe e piedi come li hanno le nostre donne, so ben io che, se non fosse sceso svelto a tirarle fuori un signore di San Giuliano, sarebbero morte laggiù nel pantano. [...] C'era però uno che le chiamava Ninfe tutte e tre, e un altro Venere e Pallade e Giunone, perché assomigliavano a loro e reggevano il paragone; [...]. Ma sì, disse poi un altro, sono certo le tre Grazie che sono scese quaggiù per essere tutte in disgrazia di Giove, padrone delle grazie, che ha inflitto loro questa disgrazia per non esser riuscito a ottenere la grazia di un pochino della loro grazia; ma il grande Pirro le ha tratte fuori da questa disgrazia per acquistare per sé la loro grazia. Poiché non se ne poteva più dal ridere per queste baie, dico poi: Sono tutte ciarle; per dirla come sta veramente, esse sono tre femmine belle e splendite come stelle, e il Conte è andato così semplicemente ad aiutarle come se gli fossero sorelle o altre parenti'. See Lomazzo – I Facchini della Val di Blenio (eds.), *Rabisch*, poem no. 52, 238–242.

Magldè, on alt' diss pù, gl'hign i trè Graçigl  
 Ch'hin droccà sciò par ess tucc in desgraçigl  
 De Gliòv, patrogn di graçigl,  
 Ch'o gh'ha dacc sta descgraçiglia  
 Par no possè avè graçiglia,  
 D'on pochign dra soa graçiglia,  
 Ma 'l gran Pirr gl' ha tracc fò da sta desgraçiglia  
 Par acquistà par lù ra sova graçiglia.  
 [...]<sup>44</sup>

This is a harsh joke on the graceful concept of grace. Fusing the nymphs with the Graces, and with Venus and Pallas, the poem makes fun of the iconographic confusion and lets the Graces – traditionally characterised by their sweet charm, helpfulness, virtue of generosity and morally fine manners – end up as amoral and clumsy women.<sup>45</sup> The Graces of this poem are somewhat meaningless figures, deprived of their aesthetic and moral quality, reduced to their corporeal beauty. Morandotti was the first to correlate the three females of the poem with the three marble nymphs inhabiting Pirro's grotto.<sup>46</sup> The poem does not simply refer to Pirro's *nymphaeum*, but wittily comments on the nymphs and presents a poetic discussion about the female figures' ambiguity, further accentuating the Early Modern visitors' experience of the marble statues. In another poem by Rainoldi in *Rabisch*, there is a comparable inversion of categories and concepts of female beauty again connected to the figure of the nymph.<sup>47</sup> Here, a farmer presents a gift to his beloved nymph who lives in Arcadia. He calls her by ridiculous diminutive forms of the word *ninfa*, such as 'ninfettola,' 'ninfolina,' and 'ninfina'. He describes her in anti-Petrarchist manner as an oddly distorted version of ideal Petrarchist female beauty, taking up the characterizing topoi and estranging them, not least by using dialect. She is said to have blond hair, and the poem's speaker skeptically asks whether they are really comparable to threads of the finest gold ('[...] quelle trezze bionde e crespole,/ che paren propri fili d'or finissimo?').<sup>48</sup> Her nose is compared to a

44 Lomazzo – I Facchini della Val di Blenio (eds.), *Rabisch*, poem no. 52, 241–242.

45 See Mertens, *Die drei Grazien*.

46 Morandotti, *Milano profana* 54.

47 See the poem by Bernardo Rainoldi in Lomazzo – I Facchini della Val di Blenio (eds.), *Rabisch*, poem no. 55, 253–263.

48 Ibidem 254.

cucumber, her teeth to a chain of innumerable pearls, and her shoulders to a piece of marble:<sup>49</sup>

[...]  
 E'l nas è da composta on gran cocumero,  
 [...]  
 I dent on fil de perle senza numero,  
 [...]  
 Un pezz de marmo l'un e l'altro umero.<sup>50</sup>

The poetry connected to the villa's cultural context can obviously mock and deprive the nymph(s) of the beauty they possess in marble. In the verses' dialect and its grotesque aesthetics, the nymph suffers the same fate as all other motifs and figures representing ideals of beauty and superior qualities in the framework of Early Modern aesthetics and moral standards, which become targets of burlesque and carnevalesque inversions.

The iconographic overlapping of Venus, the Graces, the Fates, and the nymphs also figures in the theoretical discourse about art in the villa's circle. Lomazzo, the academy's president, himself an artist and art theorist and presumably part of the group that invented the program for the villa and its grottos, deals with the nymphs systematically in his *Trattato dell'arte della pittura, scoltura e architettura* (1584). Lomazzo dedicates three chapters of his tract to the form of nymphs and Naiads, trying to systematise all the types and iconographies of nymphs occurring in stories from antiquity until the sixteenth century.<sup>51</sup> He cites sources such as Ovid, Virgil, Homer, Pliny the Elder, and Vincenzo Cartari discussing the diverging information on the nymphs regarding their number, age, appearance, and names. And yet this encyclopedic undertaking does not come up with final definitions.<sup>52</sup> Instead, Lomazzo presents a vast range of

49 Ibidem.

50 Lomazzo – I Facchini della Val di Blenio (eds.), *Rabisch*, poem no. 55, 253–263.

51 Lomazzo, *Scritti sulle arti*, ch. xiv (“Della forma di Giunone, dea dell’aria, e delle sue Ninfe”) 504–507, ch. xv (“Della forma dell’Oceano, di Nettuno, delle Ninfe e monstri marini”) 507–514, and ch. xvi (“Della forma de i fiumi e delle Naiadi, ninfe loro”) 514–517. In ch. xvii (“Della forma delle Muse”), Lomazzo also compares the muses to the nymphs, writing in regard to the first: ‘Si formavano alate, giovani, belle e vaghe come Ninfe, e coronate di diverse frondi’ (‘They were winged, young, beautiful, and elegant [vaghe] like the nymphs, and crowned with various foliage’, Lomazzo, *Scritti sulle arti*, ch. xvii, 518).

52 One can find another sort of systematisation, much more determined, written in the modern dictionary style in: Pozzoli G. – Romani F. – Peracchi A. (eds.), *Dizionario d’ogni mitologia e antichità*, vol. iv (Milan: 1823) 107–113.



nymphs, spanning from a single beautiful woman with a specific name and story to a completely unspecified group of marine monster-like creatures.<sup>53</sup> He points out that in some artworks, a female mythological figure may represent more than one goddess. Thus one figure might stand for Venus, Diana, and the Fates all at once.<sup>54</sup> In line with Cartari and Larson's study, outlined above, Lomazzo writes that the iconography of the nymphs overlaps with that of the three Graces and that both groups, young and beautiful, are companions of Venus, and as such are emblems of fertility. Of the Naiads he says that they in general take on the form of nude women with a soft and languid look, their limbs drooping and their fleshiness protruding a little, just as in the case of women in general. He tells us that the Naiads are all about water, referring to the natural elements, and furthermore writes:

Ma per venire alle Ninfe ormai, che si finsero abitar ne i fiumi, in generale si possono formare in guise di donne ignude, con ciera languida e molle, con le membra che paiano ricadenti e le grassiezze in certo modo spiccate dal suo luogo, sì come appunto si veggono quelle delle donne. E sicome per lo più le Ninfe et i Dei del mare si fanno vecchi, così queste debbono rappresentarsi men vecchie, rispetto alla grandezza del fiume verso il mare, ma però vaghe e belle, massime se sono Ninfe di fiume ameno e dilettevole come il Ticino; e debbono essere collocate in modo che mostrino la lor grandezza. Ma volendole ornare e vestire, si gli accomoderanno abiti conformi al color dell'acqua e della spuma del fiume, et ornamenti di pietre, frondi et altre cose tali corrispondenti alla natura e qualità del fiume loro.

To come to the nymphs, who inhabit the rivers, one can say that they in general appear as nude women, with languid and soft faces and with their limbs appearing to hang down and with their flesh and curves [*grassezze*] standing out in a certain manner and in certain places, just like on the bodies of women. While the nymphs and goddesses of the sea are depicted as old, these ones should appear younger with regard to the size of their river compared to the sea. However, they should always be elegant and beautiful [*vaghe e belle*], especially if they are the nymphs of rivers as delightful as the Ticino; and they have to be placed in a way that they can expose their greatness [*grandezza*]. If you though want to decorate

53 Lomazzo, *Scritti sulle arti*, ch. xv, 512.

54 Lomazzo, *Scritti sulle arti*, ch. xiv, 506.

and dress them, you should choose dresses conforming to the colors of the water and foam of their river, and decorations of stone, foliage, and other similar things corresponding to the nature and type [*qualità*] of their river.<sup>55</sup>

These rather general descriptions are easily applicable to the young, beautiful, nude Naiads of the Lainate grottos with their female curves and their soft shimmering skin of white marble, shown in full size, placed in niches within the water basins, but at the same time mysteriously hidden in the shady and humid grottos between water features.

The one nymph of the waters Lomazzo describes in more detail is Galatea. Referring to ancient authorities such as Hesiod, Ovid, and Philostratus, he describes Galatea in accordance with her name as white as milk. Her whiteness thus relates to the white foam of the waters. Her hair is blond, wet and loose, and Lomazzo cites Philostratus's narration that Galatea, graceful in her movements, rides over the sea in a wagon pulled by dolphins, holding up her purple drapery filled by the wind and affording her shade – just the way Raphael depicted her in his famous fresco in the Villa Farnesina in Rome.<sup>56</sup> Galatea is also present at Lainate, this time though not in the grottos but in the stately villa. Here she is presented in a less savage mode, not riding a carriage and without her hair loose, but enthroned and adorned [Figs. 10.13 and 10.14]. The pictorial decoration of the villa was completed shortly after the garden and grottos were opened. Camillo Procaccini, Carlo Antonio Procaccini, and il Morazzone had painted the villa's frescoes, combining landscape paintings with grotesque frames and mythological and allegorical themes.<sup>57</sup> The motifs elaborate on the shift from the villa's interior to the exterior world of the garden site. The nymph Galatea can be found in one of the villa's halls in the stateroom area. She is painted in bright colors and is set in the middle of the wall opposite to the wall with the representation of Venus with Cupid. Elegantly swirling and brightly colored

55 Lomazzo, *Scritti sulle arti*, ch. xvi, 517.

56 Lomazzo, *Scritti sulle arti*, ch. xv, 511–512: '[...] Galatea, così chiamata dalla bianchezza che rappresenta in lei forse la spuma dell'acqua [...] ha d'aver le chiome e la faccia simile al latte [...]. Filostrato, in una favola che finge del Ciclope, introduce Galatea che se ne va per lo mar quieto sopra un carro tirato da delfini [...] et ella, alzando le belle braccia, stende alla dolce aura di Zefiro un panno purpureo per far coperta al carro et a sé ombra. Le chiome non si gli hanno da fare sparse al vento, ma come bagnate hanno da stare distese, parte sopra la candida faccia e parte sopra i bianchi omeri'. On the color purple in relation to the nymphs, see also Porphyry, *L'antro delle Ninfe* 39.

57 Cf. Morandotti, *Milano profana* 196–202.



FIGURE 10.13  
Camillo or Carlo Antonio  
Procaccini (attributed),  
Galatea Framed by Grotesque  
Ornaments (1590–1595). Fresco.  
Lainate, Villa Visconti Borromeo  
Litta, stateroom. Detail.



FIGURE 10.14  
Camillo or Carlo Antonio  
Procaccini (attributed), Galatea  
Framed by Grotesque Ornaments  
(1590–1595). Fresco. Lainate,  
Villa Visconti Borromeo Litta,  
stateroom.

grotesque ornaments frame her, while she is encircled by a golden cartouche. These grotesques are courtly and decorative, differing in their style from the ones in the grotto's galleries. Here in the villa, Galatea sits on top of a formation of greenish rocks making up a kind of throne. She is naked and staged in a highly artful pose. Turning her head over her right shoulder and bending her upper body and arms to the left, she seems to be in between sitting and stepping forward, with her right leg reaching towards the beholder. A reddish-purple drapery wrapped around her shoulder, back, and legs seems to flutter

in the wind and enlivens the twist of her body. The artful contortion of her posture is accentuated by the flame-like swirling tale of the enormous fish-like animal bending upwards from under the nymph's feet. The fish's serpentine line intertwines with the nymph's silhouette and her embrace. Together they refer to the ideal mannerist female beauty – agile and highly elegant. A light green ribbon pins up the nymph's curly, golden hair and jewelry adorns her neck, wrists, and right arm. Within the symbolically charged, brightly colored, and delicately painted decorations on the walls of the prominent spaces inside the villa, the figure of the nymph appears as the individualised, graceful, and dignified nymph Galatea. As such, she represents a specific motif of a mythological story and aesthetically adopts the refined style of the villa's interior decoration program.

In the cultural context of Pirro's villa we find the nymph as a triplet in the form of life-sized white marble statues, naked and bathing, to be looked at from different angles, peeking through the holes in the stony walls of the shady and humid grottos. We also find the nymph as the enthroned Galatea depicted in the refined fresco painting, adorned by the decorative grotesques, and presented in the prominent staterooms of the villa. We can further find her as a poetic figure in the *Rabisch* poems, inverting the ideals of female beauty and wittily commenting on the semantic and aesthetic blurring of different female characters. In addition, we can read about her in the discourse on art, where her ambiguous iconography is discussed in an encyclopedic manner. These diverse figurations of the nymph show that in the visual arts the nymphs are without exception beautiful. They are the medium to elaborate on ideal female beauty in the contest between art and nature, staged within the grottos and the prominent halls of the villa. Nonetheless, the fresco nymph inside the villa clearly differs from the savage nymphs, the elusive figures in white marble shimmering in the humid caverns, where they configure female beauty in three variants. Like the visitor looking at them, these three are always in motion; they are nameless and hide in niches, with serpentine lines and shifting semantics, their white marble skin contrasting with the grotto's rough surface. The fresco nymph however is a single, individualised figure, clearly identifiable as Galatea, charged with attributes, brightly colored, adorned with jewelry and elegantly framed by the ornamental structure of the wall's decoration program as the courtly styled nymph. While the visual arts create, examine, and reveal a figure shaped by a formalised idea of beauty in the figure of the nymph(s), the poems use the nymph to deconstruct the idea of ideal female beauty. They wittily reflect on the nymph's semantic plurality, or rather uncertainty, and subvert her beauty to an entertaining deformation. The art theory, for its part, claims to order and classify in a structured mode the various semantics of the nymph(s), inherited from ancient and Early Modern authorities, without

reaching a clear definition. This way, the figure of the nymph obviously presents itself as a veritable *figura*: alterable, in motion, shifting in semantics and connecting seemingly separated spheres like art and nature. The different figures of the nymph in the Lainate context figure and de-figure female beauty, in line with the *poietics* of nature demonstrating the virtuosity of art. They evoke a field of associations and structural analogies and explore the limits of a framework of rules and significations.<sup>58</sup> The figure of the nymph is thus characterised by an epistemic elusiveness; her episteme is a figural knowledge. The respective medium, concrete materialisation, and affiliation with a certain genre determine the figuration of the nymph, whose mediality in the cultural context of Pirro's villa at Lainate is extremely versatile.

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<sup>58</sup> See for this concept of *figura*: Didi-Huberman G., “Von den Mächten der Figur. Exegese und Visualität in der christlichen Kunst (1990)”, in Alloa E. (ed.), *Bildtheorien aus Frankreich. Eine Anthologie* (Munich: 2011) 273–304.

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# Nymphs Bathing in the King's Garden: La Granja de San Ildefonso and Caserta

*Eva-Bettina Krems*

Nymphs fit perfectly into a palace garden of the early modern age. As minor female nature deities they are typically associated with a particular location or landform.<sup>1</sup> Regarded as divine spirits who animate nature, they dwell in mountainous regions and in forests by lakes and streams. Often they are part of the retinue of a god, such as Dionysus, Mercury or Pan, or a goddess, generally the huntress Diana. Since the sixteenth century at the latest, nymphs have belonged to gardens' inventory: nymphs were traditionally connected to the *locus amoenus*, especially with artificial and natural springs and streams, rivers and fountains.

This paper deals with the role of the nymph in the royal garden of the eighteenth century. It focuses primarily on nymphs in a narrative context: on nymphs bathing. These bathing nymphs mostly appear accompanied by Diana, as, for example, depicted in the famous painting by Titian.<sup>2</sup>

- 1 Käppel L., "Nymphen", in Cancik H. – Schneider H. (eds.), *Der neue Pauly. Enzyklopädie der Antike*, vol. 8 (Stuttgart – Weimar: 2000) 1071–1072; Kramer A., "Nymphen", in Moog-Grünewald M. (ed.), *Der neue Pauly. Supplemente*, vol. 5: *Mythenrezeption. Die antike Mythologie in Literatur, Musik und Kunst von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart* (Stuttgart – Weimar: 2008) 474–484; Baert B., *'Locus Amoenus' and the Sleeping Nymph: Ekphrasis, Silence and Genius Loci*, *Studies in Iconology* 3 (Leuven – Paris – Bristol: 2016).
- 2 Titian, "Diana and Actaeon" (1556–1559), oil on canvas, 184,5 × 202,2 cm. London, National Gallery. For Titian's painting cf. Rosand D., "Tizian. Diana im Bade von Actaeon überrascht", in Wismer B. – Badelt S. (eds.), *Diana und Actaeon. Der verbotene Blick auf die Nacktheit*, exh. cat., Düsseldorf 2008–2009 (Ostfildern: 2008) 50–55. Concerning the goddess Diana, see Föcking M., "Artemis", in Moog-Grünewald M. (ed.), *Der neue Pauly. Supplemente*, vol. 5: *Mythenrezeption. Die antike Mythologie in Literatur, Musik und Kunst von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart* (Stuttgart – Weimar: 2008) 151–163, esp. 157–160 for representations of Diana in the arts and architecture. Concerning the different role models and possibilities of reception of "nymphs" in history (e.g. as a subject of ancient mythology, *topos* of femininity, symbol of sexual and voyeuristic desire, synonym for witches, etymological origin of "nymphomania", correspondent of muses over arts and science, motive of natural power) see the contribution of Baumgärtel B., "Erzähle, du habest mich gesehen ..." – Wege zur Erkenntnis. Nymphen, Diana und Aktäon zwischen Keuschheit und Blickbegierde", in *Der große Pan*





FIGURE 11.1 Baths of Diana. *Fountain. Segovia, La Granja de San Ildefonso.*

Two important examples from the eighteenth century show the goddess of the hunt accompanied by bathing nymphs in a royal garden: the Baths of Diana in La Granja de San Ildefonso near Segovia, around 80 kilometres northwest of Madrid, Spain [Fig. 11.1], and Diana with her nymphs in the Reggia di Caserta near Naples, Italy [Fig. 11.2]. The representation of Diana with her nymphs as a monumental garden sculpture was an entirely new concept even though the solitary figure of Diana was, of course, often displayed in a garden context before.<sup>3</sup> This paper will focus on three categories: location and tradition, movement and space, and finally the element of water.

Both sculpture groups, in La Granja and Caserta, are part of a large-scale palace and garden project that must be regarded with close reference to the palace and garden of Versailles, not only because Versailles is often mentioned as a model for big palaces in Europe in the eighteenth century, but also because the site's connection with the French King Louis XIV was of great importance in dynastic and iconological terms. The royal commissioner of

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*ist tot! Pan und das arkadische Personal*, exh. cat., Düsseldorf 2007 (Worms: 2007) 53–67; the text was republished in slightly altered form as Baumgärtel B., “‘Erzähle, du habest mich gesehen ...’ – Wege zur Erkenntnis. Nymphen, Diana und Aktäon zwischen Keuschheit und Blickbegierde”, in Wismer B. – Badelt S. (eds.), *Diana und Actaeon. Der verbotene Blick auf die Nacktheit*, exh. cat., Düsseldorf 2008–2009 (Ostfildern: 2008) 30–37.

3 For garden sculptures cf. MacDougall E., *Fountains, Statues, and Flowers: Studies in Italian Gardens of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Washington, DC: 1994).



FIGURE 11.2 Diana and Actaeon. *Fountain. Caserta, Reggia di Caserta.*

La Granja in Spain, Philip V (1683–1746), who became King of Spain in 1700, was the grandson of Louis XIV. The palace of La Granja – originally planned as a retreat from the court – was begun in 1720 [Fig. 11.3]. The first-born son of Philip's second marriage with Isabella Farnese, Charles (1716–1788), conquered the kingdoms of Naples and of Sicily and was crowned king in 1735, reigning as Charles VII of Naples and Charles V of Sicily. The construction of the Royal Palace of Caserta [Fig. 11.4] for Charles VII was begun in 1752.

Undoubtedly, the garden and park of Versailles was the primary model for both structures,<sup>4</sup> yet we find no bathing nymphs as companions of Diana in a monumental scale in the huge park and garden complex.<sup>5</sup> Nymphs were of course part of the programme. As reclining single figures, we find them in the immediate vicinity of the garden façade of the palace, at the *Parterre d'Eau* with its two large rectangular pools. On the frame of each pool four reclining nymphs cast in bronze [Fig. 11.5] accompany four rivers of France to which are added in the corners four groups of children.<sup>6</sup> The significance of this sculpture programme is obvious: the reclining figures of the nymphs next to the

4 Of course, one should not forget Marly as well as a model for La Granja: Herrero Sanz M.J., "Los jardines de la Granja de San Ildefonso: Felipe V entre Marly y Versailles", *Bulletin du Centre de recherche du château de Versailles* 6 (2012), <http://crcv.revues.org/11940> (24 May, 2017).

5 There is a monumental relief of the nymphs; see note 56.

6 The rivers are the Loire and the Loiret, the Rhône and the Saône, the Seine and the Marne, the Garonne and the Dordogne.



FIGURE 11.3 *Palace and garden. Segovia, La Granja de San Ildefonso.*



FIGURE 11.4 *Reggia di Caserta. Palace. Segovia.*



FIGURE 11.5  
*Nymph. Versailles,  
Garden, Parterre d'Eau.*

rivers represent the major rivers that run through France and thus refer to the territorial dimension. The groups of children symbolise the four elements, with the major element being water. It conjures the dream of an abundance of the water element just in front of the palace of Versailles where water was extremely scarce.<sup>7</sup>

There were no other nymphs within the central axis, or perspective, in Versailles [Fig. 11.6], which is so important for understanding the whole complex. As is generally known, Versailles does not correspond to the concept of a garden, which should primarily serve as a *Rifugium* or place for distraction and amusements. Versailles was conceived as a microcosm of a new space system, as a signifier of a new state and even world order.<sup>8</sup> Equating Louis XIV with the sun god Apollo was not only a mythological game, but also a political calculation. Apollo as leader of the Muses and the founder of a universal harmony made reference to the political objective of Louis, to portray himself as the new head of the Christian world, which was to pacify and to dominate. The garden reflects this principle of universal order, the water surfaces in this

7 Brix M., *Der absolute Garten. André Le Nôtre in Versailles* (Stuttgart: 2009) 62. For further reading see Schneider P., "Die komposite Welt des Parterre d'Eau der Gartenanlage von Versailles 1672–1683. Charles Le Brun im Spannungsfeld von Kunst und Wissenschaft", *Die Gartenkunst* 12, 2 (2000) 257–275; Schneider P., "Die Mysterien der Herrschaft und die Dramatisierung der Wissenschaften. Das Parterre d'Eau-Vorhaben von Versailles, in Heßler M. (ed.), *Konstruierte Sichtbarkeiten. Wissenschafts- und Technikbilder seit der frühen Neuzeit* (Munich: 2006) 153–178.

8 Thompson I., *The Sun King's Garden: Louis XIV, André Le Nôtre and the Creation of the Gardens of Versailles* (London: 2006).

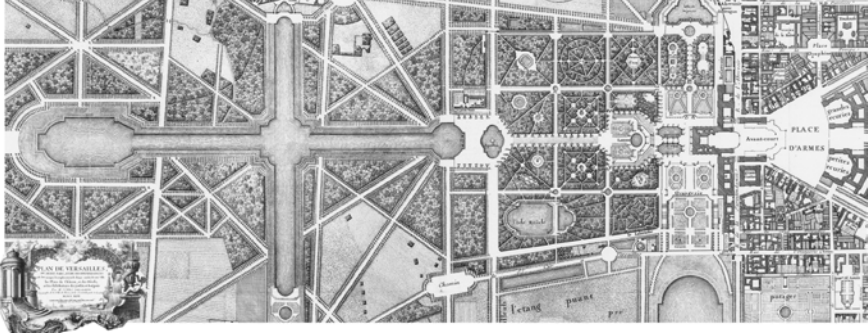


FIGURE 11.6 Jean Delagrève, *Plan de Versailles, du petit parc, et de ses dependances où sont marqués les emplacements de chaque maison de cette ville, les plans du Château, et des hôtels, et les distributions des jardins et bosquets (1746). Map.*

central perspective reflect the sky. A highlight within the central axis is the *Bassin d'Apollon* [Fig. 11.7].<sup>9</sup> The four Tritons blow into their conches and announce the beginning of the new day; Apollo, seated in the carriage, directs the horses. This group of sculptures is closely linked with the heroic prospect of the Grand Canal right at the juncture between the garden and park. The *Bassin d'Apollon* accentuates the large perspective; it fits the spatial concept of André le Nôtre nicely.<sup>10</sup>

This concept of spatial control was not the decisive factor in the garden and park of the Spanish king Philip V in La Granja de San Ildefonso [Fig. 11.8].<sup>11</sup> At San Ildefonso the centre was the old farm with its cloister court, the *Patio de la Fuente*, with the large collegiate church adjoining on the north-west,

9 Pérouse de Montclos J., *Versailles* (Cologne: 1996) 378.

10 Brix, *Der absolute Garten* 189–211.

11 “Planta de los Jardines y Palacio del Real Sitio de San Ildefonso”, 1781, Biblioteca Digital de Castilla y León. The construction of the royal seat of La Granja de San Ildefonso began in 1720, when Philip V acquired the lands called “Granja de San Ildefonso”, set in a unique landscape at the foot of the Guadarrama Mountains, from the monks of the Order of St Jerome. One of the first actions was the layout of the garden, and so French artists Étienne Boutelou and René Carlier were called upon. For a more detailed presentation of the construction and evolution of La Granja de San Ildefonso as royal summer residence and its integration in an extensive concept of French landscape gardening see Herrero Sanz, “Los jardines de la Granja”. See also *El real sitio de La Granja de San Ildefonso. Retrato y escena del Rey*, exh. cat. (Madrid: 2000). The main source for information on the gardens is still Digard J., *Les jardins de la Granja et la sculpture décorative* (Paris: 1934).





FIGURE 11.7 Bassin d'Apollon. Versailles, Park.

completely dominating the palace court. It was the first thing built and was consecrated as early as 1724. For the garden and park, gigantic subterranean works were needed, on quite another scale from those at Versailles, so as to create level terraces and plots for gardens in the steep mountain cleft. Of one thing, however, they had enough and to spare, and that was water; we will come to this point later. As the plans of the first half of the eighteenth century show, there was no dominant central axis with a huge *Parterre*.<sup>12</sup> Instead, there were several areas that formed smaller units, populated by gods on twenty-six sculptural fountains. The French artists René Fremin, Jean Thierry and, and later, Jacques Bousseau led a team of Parisian sculptors between 1720 and 1745.<sup>13</sup>

The Baths of Diana [Fig. 11.1] was the last fountain: it dates from the end of the reign of Philip V (1737–1745).<sup>14</sup> It was the only one of an architectural nature, a huge fountain at the end-point of a long transverse axis. This path, which runs alongside the façade of the palace, was specially widened and the

12 See, for example, Fernando Méndez de Rao, after the sketches of Étienne Marchand, “Plano general con los jardines” [Master plan for the gardens] (around 1726–1740). Madrid, Servicio Geográfico del Ejército.

13 Sancho J.L. – Aparicio J.R., *Real Sitio de La Granja de San Ildefonso and Riofrío* (Madrid: 2014) 20.

14 Its plan was by René Frémin and Jacques Bousseau; it was finished under the supervision of Pierre Puthois and Hubert Dumandré. Sancho – Aparicio, *Real Sitio de La Granja de San Ildefonso and Riofrío* 39. Callejo Delgado M.J. – Callejo Delgado F., “Diana en los Jardines de La Granja de San Ildefonso”, in *Lecturas de historia del arte* 2 (1990) 420–425.

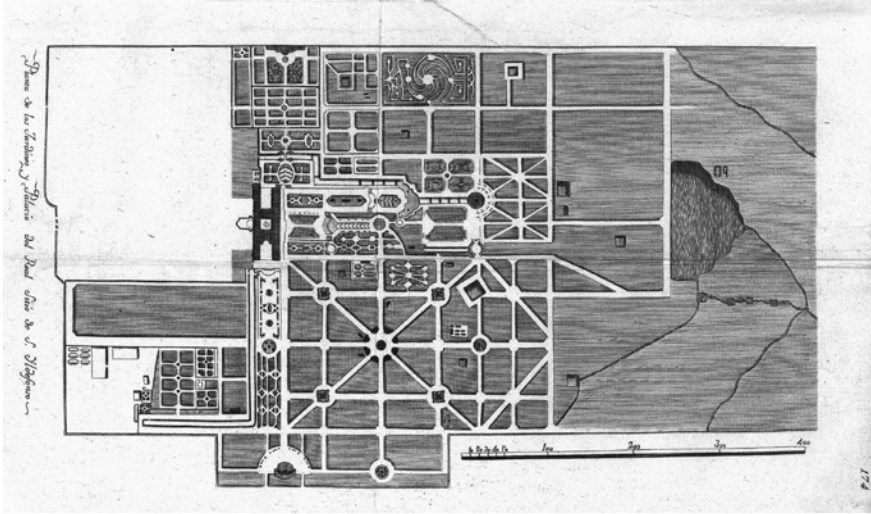


FIGURE 11.8 Planta de los Jardines y Palacio del Real Sitio de San Ildefonso (1781). *Biblioteca de Castilla y León.*

semi-circular space in front of the fountain was enlarged. The fountain is a place of waters similar to the French water buffet (i.e. the Grand Trianon water buffet at Versailles), ornamented with marble architecture and bronze statues. Twenty nymphs are spread around the semi-circular pool and partly on the large stages of the platform which serves as the monumental pedestal of the fountain. The architectural framework forms a centre with a big niche and pilasters. A pediment with a large vase on top forms the highest point. The Baths of Diana is the only fountain in La Granja with an architectural frame, giving the impression of a precious treasure, which is reinforced by the colour and material. The mirrors of the pilasters, the niche and the pediment are encrusted with countless shells. Against this backdrop, the sculptures of Diana and her nymphs, which were cast in lead, but provided with a bronze colour, provide a strong contrast. This luxurious architectural form which includes a lot of naturalistic elements corresponds to only one written source. In his *Metamorphoses*, Ovid describes the place of the baths of Diana as a 'wooded cave' (which we definitely do not find in La Granja), but also as a place where nature imitates art:

Deep in the valley  
Is a wooded cave, not artificial but natural,  
But nature in her genius has imitated art,



FIGURE 11.9 Baths of Diana. *Fountain. Segovia, La Granja de San Ildefonso. Detail.*

Making an arch out of native pumice and tufa.  
On the right a spring of crystal-clear water  
Murmured as it widened into a pool  
Edged with soft grass. Here the woodland goddess,  
Weary from the hunt, would bathe her virgin limbs.<sup>15</sup>

The architectural wall with the high niche frame the main event which takes place in the middle of the block-like steps. The goddess Diana is right in the centre [Fig. 11.9]; according to Ovid she is taller than the nymphs ('head and shoulders above them'). There are only a few hints of her profession, the hunt. Her right hand is resting on a quiver; her dog, sitting at her feet, looks up to her. Diana is 'weary from the hunt'. Ovid describes this moment of relaxation with the picture of the 'unstrung bow' which she hands to one of her nymphs. The goddess of the hunt was rarely seen more relaxed: she feels completely unobserved, her bosom is bare. Of the in-total twenty nymphs who are gathered throughout the fountain, five are directly employed with Diana's toilet. The sculptor adheres closely to Ovid (III, 178–181): 'Another takes her cloak over her arm' – this nymph is on the left side of Diana; 'two untie her sandals' – the sculptor shows only one nymph, for good reason as I will later explain; 'and Crocale, cleverer than these, gathers up the goddess' hair from her neck and ties it in a knot while her own is still loose' – this is the nymph close to Diana on her right; the sculptor even included the detail with the loose hair. Another

15 Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. S. Lombardo (Indianapolis: 2010) 69–70 (III, 168–175).



nymph, coming from behind, carries a jug; her garment is fluttering, almost as if she were dancing. The other fifteen nymphs are distributed around the basin, playing with dogs, swans and dolphins that spray jets of water into the air.

The Baths of Diana in La Granja depicts the scene *before* the hunter Actaeon appears. In fact, he is not there, although there is somebody in close proximity: the niche of the architectural frame is occupied by a male figure who clearly dominates Diana and her nymphs in scale [Fig. 11.10]. This strange figure is seen from a distance long before the spectator recognises Diana and her nymphs. Sometimes this figure is identified with Actaeon, the hunter that stumbled across Diana, thus seeing her naked.<sup>16</sup> According to Ovid Actaeon stopped and stared, amazed at her ravishing beauty. As revenge, he was changed by her into a stag, and pursued and killed by his fifty hounds. But this part of the story is not shown in La Granja. None of the attributes of this male figure resting on the rock point to the hunter, and the central position contradicts the fact that, according to Ovid, Actaeon was wandering without a destination.

But who is this naked figure in the niche with the extremely long flute, half covered by an animal fur, ivy leaves in his hair? Strange as it first sounds, it might be Apollo.<sup>17</sup> But it is not Apollo with the lyre; this canonical Apollo is displayed in the Palace of La Granja in the *Sala di Fuente*: Apollo as leader of the muses who also stand in the surrounding niches of the gallery.<sup>18</sup> The flute is a highly unusual attribute of Apollo.<sup>19</sup> Usually it is Pan who blows the flute, the shepherd's instrument, in competition with Apollo. Apollo in La Granja refers to an early episode of Apollo among the shepherds. Zeus, father of the gods, imposed punishment upon Apollo for killing the Cyclops. He was to descend from luxurious Olympus and serve the Thessalonian king Admetos as a shepherd. Instead, however, Apollo entertained the shepherds and peasants with eloquent speech and beautiful music. Not only did Apollo bring high culture to mankind, he impressed those who saw him with his own physical beauty. Gottlieb Schick painted this episode 1806–1808 in a classical manner with an

16 Sancho – Aparicio, *Real Sitio de La Granja de San Ildefonso and Riofrío* 39: 'a faun representing Actaeon plays the flute while espying the scene'.

17 This is also suggested for good reasons by Herrero Sanz, "Los jardines de la Granja" n. 38.

18 Francesco Maria Nocchieri, "Apollo" and "Muses" (around 1680). Marble (Apollo), plaster (Muses), Royal Palace of *La Granja de San Ildefonso, Sala de la Fuente*. Sancho – Aparicio, *Real Sitio de La Granja de San Ildefonso and Riofrío* 80.

19 A rare Polish example: Jerzy Siemiginowski-Eleuter (1660–1711), "Apollo Playing the Flute", c. 1692, Palace at Wilanów, Poland, Gabinet Krolowej; Fijałkowski W. *Królewski Wilanów* (Warsaw: 1997), fig. 65, 84. See also the following note.



FIGURE 11.10 Baths of Diana. *Fountain. Segovia, La Granja de San Ildefonso. Detail.*

Apollo who holds the lyre – not a flute.<sup>20</sup> The figure in the niche of the fountain in La Granja is about to blow the flute, and it seems to depict Apollo just after having been thrown out of Olympus. Exactly this moment is described in a famous contemporary text: *Les aventures de Télémaque* (*The adventures of Telemachus*) (1693–1694, published – perhaps without permission – in April 1699) is a didactic French novel by François de Salignac de La Mothe-Fénelon (1651–1715), the later Archbishop of Cambrai (1695).<sup>21</sup> *Télémaque* is a fictional continuation of Book IV of Homer's *Odyssey*, recounting the educational travels of Telemachus, son of Ulysses, accompanied by his tutor, Mentor, who is revealed at the end of the story to be Minerva, goddess of wisdom, in disguise. In Book II, Apollo is forced to go to the shepherds and to play the flute:

Apollo, depriv'd of his glorious Beams, was forc'd to turn Shepherd, and keep the Sheep of King Admetus. He play'd on the Flute [...].<sup>22</sup>

<sup>20</sup> "Apollo among the Shepherds", Stuttgart, Staatsgalerie.

<sup>21</sup> Fénelon François, *The Adventures of Telemachus. The Son of Ulysses*, trans. I. Littlebury – A. Boyer (Jena: 1749).

<sup>22</sup> Ibidem 32.

Exactly this Apollo, 'depriv'd of his glorious Beams', playing the flute, seems to be adopted for the fountain in La Granja [Fig. 11.10]. Not only was the *Telemachus* probably the most widely read book in eighteenth-century Europe,<sup>23</sup> moreover the text must have been well known to the commissioner of La Granja, Philip V, since Fénelon was tutor to him and his brothers.<sup>24</sup> Philip V exhibited the deep influence of Fénelon throughout his life.<sup>25</sup>

However, in the fountain of La Granja there are no shepherds who gather around Apollo. Instead, it is Diana with her nymphs. Why Apollo and Diana? They are quite often depicted together. Lucas Cranach the Elder (c.1472–1553) shows the sun god Apollo, admired for his moral standing and physical beauty, and his twin sister Diana, goddess of the moon, who was associated with

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- 23 After its success in France, Fénelon's *Bildungsroman* was distributed and translated with similar success throughout Europe; cf. Ferrand N., "Les circulations européennes du roman français, leurs modalités et leurs enjeux", in Beaurepaire P.-Y. – Pourchasse P. (eds.), *Les circulations internationales en Europe, années 1680–années 1780* (Rennes: 2010) 399–410, esp. 404. According to Diane Berrett Brown, *Telemachus* was 'a runaway eighteenth-century bestseller: 115 French editions and 75 translations were published between 1699 and 1810. Forty years after its initial publication, each new printing continued to sell out [...]. Indeed, no book other than the Bible would appear in as many editions throughout eighteenth-century France, where it became a pedagogical staple [...]' ; Berrett Brown D. "Emile's Missing Text: *Les Aventures de Télémaque*", *Symposium: A Quarterly Journal in Modern Literatures* 63, 1 (2009) 51–71.
- 24 Fénelon's influence over the education of Philip V and his brothers has been analysed by Morán Turina J.M., "La difícil aceptación de un pasado que no fue malo", in Morán Turina J.M. (ed.), *El arte en la corte de Felipe V*, exh. cat., Madrid 2002–03 (Madrid: 2002) 23–40; Torrión M. – Torrión B., "De Felipe de Anjou, enfant de France, a Felipe V: la educación de Telémaco", in Morán Turina J.M. (ed.), *El arte en la corte de Felipe V*, exh. cat., Madrid 2002–03 (Madrid: 2002) 41–88.
- 25 Ortiz-Iribas J. – Muniain Ederria S., "Prendre modèle sur Télémaque: The Fénelonian Underpinnings of 'Cultural Policy' at the Court of Philip V of Spain", in Schmitt-Maaß C. – Stockhorst S. – Ahn D. (eds.), *Fénelon in the Enlightenment: Traditions, Adaptations, and Variations* (Amsterdam – New York: 2014) 147–170. In the course of the courtly reception of Fénelon's *Telemachus* there emerged amongst others the Rock Garden of Sanspareil. Margravine Wilhelmine of Brandenburg-Bayreuth commissioned 1744 the creation of an English landscape garden at the foot of Zwernitz Castle with rock formations and fictitious places with rocks and caves. In around 1748 several of these places were interpreted after Fénelon's French novel as *Telemachus'* places. The names of different rock features (e.g. Calypso Grotto, Mentor's Grotto) reflect the literary programme of Sanspareil. Concerning Sanspareil, see Bachmann E. – Seelig L., *Felsengarten Sanspareil, Burg Zwernitz, amtlicher Führer*, rev. A. Ziffer (Munich: 1995).

chastity, archery and hunting.<sup>26</sup> But those depictions, which bring together biblical, classical and mythological stories, are not however of interest for the unusual combination of Apollo and Diana in La Granja.

Instead, an almost ironic Versailles-reference could be meant: Apollo and Diana as twins, as children of Latona, were already displayed in Versailles, namely in a central position. On the main axis of the garden, there was next to the Apollo Basin a (single) additional fountain, the Latona Basin. This fountain was one of the highlights of the myth of Apollo which decorated the garden to the glory of the Sun King. The fountain was dedicated to the legend of Latona, mother of Apollo and Diana, and depicted her encounter with the peasants of Lycia. During this episode, told by Ovid in his *Metamorphoses*, Latona punished the peasants who had insulted her by having them changed into frogs. The goddess at Versailles looks from the central base toward the Apollo Basin. The message is obvious: the Sun King enjoys the protection of the gods.<sup>27</sup>

Diana and Apollo in La Granja, the palace and garden of the grandson of Louis XIV, could therefore be understood as a genealogical-dynastic reference to Versailles. A fountain of Latona was part of the programme in La Granja as well,<sup>28</sup> and, furthermore, Diana and (perhaps) Apollo are displayed in the Baths of Diana. However, it is no longer the triumphant Apollo, but the God that was forced to be a shepherd.

There is an even more convincing reference to Versailles because nymphs were also protagonists in a bath there, although not in the central axis but in a bosquet of the garden: in the *Bains d'Apollon* [Fig. 11.11], which was originally designed for the *Grotte de Thétys*. Begun in 1664 and finished in 1670 with the installation of the statuary, the grotto formed an important symbolic component of the gardens. The *Grotte de Thétys* was symbolically related to the myth of Apollo – and therefore by association to Louis XIV. It was at the cave of the sea nymph, Thetis, that Apollo rested after driving his chariot to light

26 Lucas Cranach the Elder, "Apollo and Diana" (about 1530). Oil on wood, 45 × 31 cm. Brussels, Musées royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique; see Messling G., *De wereld van Lucas Cranach (1472–1553)*, exh. cat., Brussels – Bruges 2010–11 (Tielt: 2010) 192, cat. nr. 106.

27 Brix, *Der absolute Garten* 101–104. Some have interpreted the Latona fountain as an allegory of the victory of Louis XIV over the Fronde, the rebellion of the nobles against the power of the monarchy during the childhood of Louis XIV. Latona, the mother of Apollo, represents Anne of Austria, the mother of Louis XIV and regent during the Fronde. The metamorphosis of the peasants into frogs illustrates the punishment reserved to those who dare to rebel against the royal authority. However, no trace of this interpretation can be found in any author or document of the period. Moreover, the iconography in Versailles that Louis XIV wanted never made any reference to his family.

28 Sancho – Aparicio, *Real Sitio de La Granja de San Ildefonso and Riofrío* 38.



FIGURE 11.11 *François Girardon, Bains d'Apollon. Versailles.*

the sky. Originally, the grotto was a freestanding structure located just north of the château. The interior, which was decorated with shell-work to represent a sea cave, contained the statue group depicting the sun god attended by sea nymphs, Nereids (central grouping), and his horses being groomed by attendants of Thetis (the two accompanying statue groups). Originally, these statues were set in three individual niches in the grotto and were surrounded by various fountains and water features.<sup>29</sup> After the demolition of the Grotto in 1684, its five main sculptures were moved to the *Bosquet des Dômes* (Dome Grove), where they were placed between two marble pavilions that had been erected

29 The sculptures were by Gilles Guérin, François Girardon, Thomas Regnaudin, Gaspard Marsy, and Balthazar Marsy. Walker D.C., *The Early Career of François Girardon 1628–1686. The History of the Sculptor to Louis XIV during the Superintendence of Jean-Baptiste Colbert*, Ph.D. dissertation, New York University 1982 (Ann Arbor: 1982) 123–137. See also Erben D., *Paris und Rom. Die staatlich gelenkten Kunstbeziehungen unter Ludwig XIV* (Berlin: 2004) 326–331.





FIGURE 11.12 Baths of Diana. *Fountain. Segovia, La Granja de San Ildefonso. Detail.*

in 1677 (destroyed in 1820). This new arrangement lasted only twenty years: in 1704, the three central groups were again relocated to a different grove closer to the palace.<sup>30</sup> The original location in the Thetis Grotto was still well known thanks to the description of André Félibien.<sup>31</sup>

In our context, the central grouping, sculpted by François Girardon, is of interest [Fig. 11.11]: the sun god Apollo and his horses rest in the evening, after the setting of the sun, on the seabed, in the Grotto of Thetis. Her nymphs care for him. The comparison of the two baths in Versailles and La Granja [Fig. 11.12] reveals amazing parallels that go beyond the fact that the sculptor of La Granja, René Frémin, was a pupil of Girardon. Some of the nymphs are extremely similar, such as the one cleaning her/his feet, or the other one taking care of her/his hair. These are obvious quotes that clearly demonstrate the reference to the model in Versailles, with one important difference: it is no longer Apollo who

30 In 1778, this setting was spectacularly redesigned by Hubert Robert (1733–1808) as a naturalistic grotto with cascade; this is the fountain known today as the Baths of Apollo, which includes casts of the original marble groups. See Cayeux J. de, “Louis XVI et les Bains d’Apollon à Versailles” in *ibid.*, *Hubert Robert et les jardins* (Paris: 1996; reprint, Paris: 1987) 71–79.

31 André Félibien, *Description de la grotte de Versailles* (Paris: 1672).

is cared for, but Diana. In La Granja, we find Apollo as a lonesome flute-player on the rocks – ironically in a niche decorated with shells perhaps to represent a sea cave – while in front of him the realm of Diana dominates the scenery. In La Granja, Apollo gives way to the realm of Diana.

It is known that the real moving spirit behind most of the fountains in La Granja was Isabella Farnese, the queen. When Philip V abdicated in 1742, feeling himself completely unequal to the cares of state, he went back to La Granja,<sup>32</sup> and reserved for its rebuilding an enormous sum which the exhausted country could barely supply. But after nine months the death of the king's son caused the weary Philip to take the reins once more. The queen hoped to spur her husband to take an interest in the work at the gardens of La Granja by eagerly pressing forward with them, and a great deal was accomplished in the course of his long absence in 1727, among other things the Baths of Diana being completed.<sup>33</sup> It seems to be quite possible that Isabella had a great interest in the figure of Diana – even with a reference to herself. To portray prominent personalities of the court by means of coded images was very common.<sup>34</sup> François Clouet, for example, included several portraits in his painting “The Baths of Diana” of c.1560, with Diane de Poitiers depicted as Diana.<sup>35</sup>

32 See Herrero Sanz, “Los jardines de la Granja”: ‘En estos jardines el ánimo del rey melancólico encontraba la paz y sosiego, siempre atribulado con las obligaciones de la corona. Si en Versailles los jardines se articulan en torno a la figura de Apolo-Sol, deificando a Luis XIV, en la Granja Felipe V también encuentra su reflejo en Apolo, pero centrándose en el aspecto del dios de los pastores y la vida retirada’.

33 Walker L.L., *The Triumph of Isabella Farnese in the Fountains of Diana and Amphitrite at La Granja de San Ildefonso*, MA thesis / dissertation (University of Washington: 1992).

34 For example: Antoine Coysevox, “Marie Adélaïde of Savoy, Duchess of Burgundy as Diana” (1710). Marble, H. 2 m, L. 0.83 m, D. 0.80 m. Versailles, dép. des Sculptures. Jean-Marc Nattier, in particular, painted some disguised portraits, in which the sitter is shown as Diana, goddess of the hunt, with her traditional attributes, the bow and the quiver of arrows; one example: “Portrait of Princess Marie Adélaïde of France as Diana” (1745). Oil on canvas, 158 × 202 cm. Versailles, Musée national du Château (Inv. MV 3805); cf. Salmon X., *Jean-Marc Nattier: 1685–1766*, exh. cat., Versailles 1999–2000 (Paris: 1999) 179.

35 Rouen, Musée des Beaux-Arts, 136 × 196.5 cm. The nymph sitting on the black cloth is Catherine de Medici, mourning the death of Henry II (1559). The goddess bearing the crescent and bedecked in jewellery is Diane de Poitiers, the mistress of Henry II, who wore her colours (black and white) during the tournament that led to his death. The nymph holding the (flame-coloured) antique nuptial veil above the royal purple and in front of the fleur-de-lys of France is Mary Stuart, the wife of Francis II (1559–1560), a new Diana married through the intervention of her uncles from the Guise family. This

Yet it was still uncommon for the other protagonist of the Baths of Diana to be missing: Actaeon. We observe this phenomenon in contemporary paintings: *Le repos de Diane* became a very popular subject in French Rococo art; Jean-François de Troy,<sup>36</sup> Noël-Nicolas Coypel<sup>37</sup> or François Boucher, to mention just a few, painted the hunting goddess in a very quiet, oblivious state,<sup>38</sup> but even in most of those paintings, Actaeon is hidden somewhere.

In La Granja, there are hints towards the Actaeon part of the tale, however not within the fountain but instead on the big vases that are displayed around the surrounding area, where they serve more as a commentary than as part of the scenery. Only one of the twenty nymphs in the basin notices the outer world [Fig. 11.13]: while all the others are occupied with bathing or playing with animals, she raises her arm and seems to be slightly scared, but she looks in the direction of the viewer. The viewer of the fountain finds himself in the role of Actaeon who illicitly observes the bath of the graceful ladies.

In the Diana fountain of the Royal Palace and Park of Caserta, Actaeon plays a major role, as we shall see later. The construction of the *Reggia di Caserta* [Fig. 11.4] was begun in 1752 for Charles VII of Naples.<sup>39</sup> Since he abdicated in 1759 to become King of Spain, the project was carried to only partial completion for his third son and successor, Ferdinand IV of Naples. While the Diana fountain in La Granja was the end-point in a transverse axis, Diana and her entourage in Caserta occupies the culmination of the central axis. This axis, with its impressive length of three kilometres, starts from the rear façade of the palace, flanking a long alley with fountains adorned by large sculptural groupings, all of which create a unique scenographic impact that culminates with

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is confirmed by the thistle, the Stuart emblem, found in the foreground, while the ivy crowning one of the two satyrs identifies him as the Cardinal de Guise-Lorraine.

- 36 Jean-François de Troy, "The Rest of Diana" (1726). Oil on canvas, 130 × 196 cm. Nancy, Musée des Beaux-Arts (Inv. 270); cf. Bailey C.B., *Les amours des dieux. La peinture mythologique de Watteau à David*, exh. cat., Paris 1991–1992, Philadelphia 1992, Fort Worth 1992 (Paris: 1991) 132, cat. nr. 21; Leribault C., *Jean-François de Troy (1679–1752)* (Paris: 2002) cat. nr. P.129.
- 37 Noël-Nicolas Coypel, "Diana's Bathing" (1732), pair to the painting "Birth of Venus". Oil on canvas, 68.8 × 62.5 cm. Saint Petersburg, Hermitage Museum; cf. Delaplanche J., *Noël-Nicolas Coypel 1690–1734* (Paris: 2004).
- 38 François Boucher, "Rest of Diana". 57 × 73 cm. Paris, Louvre.
- 39 Hersey G.L., *Architecture, Poetry and Number in the Royal Palace at Caserta* (Cambridge – London: 1983); Jacobitti G.M., *Il Palazzo Reale di Caserta* (Naples: 1994); Chigiotti G., "The Design and Realization of the Park of the Royal Palace at Caserta by Luigi and Carlo Vanvitelli", *Journal of Garden History* v, 2 (Apr–June 1985) 184–206.





FIGURE 11.13 Baths of Diana. *Fountain. Segovia, La Granja de San Ildefonso. Detail: Nymph.*

the Grand Cascade [Fig. 11.14].<sup>40</sup> There is a waterfall which comes from the Caroline aqueduct, feeding the waterway. The rectilinear canal shows a discontinuous and varied articulation, alternating big basins, little waterfalls and wide segments of grassland. This arrangement, together with the slope, creates an optical artifice that makes the street seem shorter than its actual length. The architect Luigi Vanvitelli who planned the palace and park until his death in 1773 was famous for his scenographic capabilities to manipulate perspective to create the effect of an illusionist place. The most evocative aspects of the waterway, apart from its impressive landscape component, are the fountains which are decorated with a rich sculptural apparatus. At the end of the park and dominated by the grand cascade (82 metres high), there is a large basin much wider than the cascade, adorned with the groups of Diana and Actaeon sculpted by Paolo Persico with Pietro Solari and Angelo Brunelli (1785–1789)

40 De Seta C., "Der Garten des Palazzo Reale in Caserta", in Mosser M. – Teyssot G., *Die Gartenkunst des Abendlandes. Von der Renaissance bis zur Gegenwart* (Stuttgart: 1993) 323–325.



FIGURE 11.14 *Garden and Cascade. Reggia di Caserta.*

[Fig. 11.2].<sup>41</sup> Two rocky islands serve as platforms for the groups, on the right side Diana surrounded by nymphs – this time only eight –, on the left side Actaeon with his dogs. In the centre the water falls from the grand cascade.

The quiet and peaceful Baths of Diana, as we observed it in La Granja [Fig. 11.1], is transformed here into a spectacular drama, as if Ovid's tale continued. The appearance of Actaeon destroys the idyll. Diana, again the tallest among the nymphs, marked with the crescent as Luna, is startled [Fig. 11.15]. Two nymphs come to assist her in covering her nakedness. The other nymphs turn around in violent motion and also try to hurry into their garments. These actions adhere closely to Ovid:

As soon as he [= Actaeon] entered the grotto,  
The nymphs, naked as they were and dripping wet,  
Beat their breasts at the sight of the man, filled the grove

41 Hersey, *Architecture, Poetry and Number* 113–122; Petrelli F., “La fontana di Diana e Atteone a Caserta”, *Antologia di belle arti* 2 (1978) 52–58.



FIGURE 11.15 Diana and Actaeon. *Fountain. Reggia di Caserta. Detail: Diana and her nymphs.*

With the sudden shrill cries, and crowded around  
Their mistress Diana, trying to hide her body with theirs.<sup>42</sup>

Ovid vividly describes the blushing of the naked Diana:

But the goddess stood head and shoulders above them.  
Her face, as he stood there, seen without her robes,  
Was the colour of clouds lit by the setting sun,  
or rosy dawn.<sup>43</sup>

Titian painted this detail of the blushing Diana with matching vivacity. The sculptor, however, was limited by his use of white marble. He instead focuses on the movement of the bodies. The outstretched right arm of the angry goddess of the hunt reminds the viewer that she has just splashed the intruder Actaeon with the spring water while speaking the words:

<sup>42</sup> Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 70 (111, 188–192).

<sup>43</sup> Ibidem 70 (111, 193–196).



FIGURE 11.16 Diana and Actaeon. *Fountain. Reggia di Caserta. Detail: Actaeon and his dogs.*

Now may you tell how you saw me undressed,  
If you are able to tell!<sup>44</sup>

Her imperious gesture towards Actaeon on the left side anticipates the transformation:

With that brief threat  
She gave his dripping head the horns of the stag.

The transformation into a stag and especially the loss of language will be disastrous for Actaeon.

The large scale of the scene below the cascade makes walking around it possible and necessary. The viewer follows the diverse movements of the screaming nymphs and finally their eyes, some of which are directed to Diana, others to the cause of their desperation, which extends on the other side of the waterfall [Fig. 11.16]. Over there, the next horrible event has already taken place.

44 Ibidem 70 (III, 202–203).



The fleeing Actaeon looks back with a stag's head. The transformation is in full progress. His numerous dogs do not seem to comprehend this metamorphosis; they are highly confused watching this spectacle. The presentation of such a large number of dogs is highly unusual. A comparatively large number of dogs, which attack and kill the transformed Actaeon, was painted by Parmigianino in the *stufetta* of the *Rocca Sanvitale* in Fontanellato.<sup>45</sup>

It is again Ovid's text where we find the source for the depiction of so many dogs. Between the transformation of Actaeon and the moment when the dogs lacerate their master, Ovid presents a strikingly long catalogue of dogs.<sup>46</sup> In about twenty verses, more than thirty dogs' names and the same number of breeds are listed. The sculptor in Caserta shows ten of them in total. Most of them still lurk warily while only one is getting dangerously close to Actaeon. The immensely stretched moment in Ovid's text visualises the brutality of the drama. In Caserta the sculptor is thus capable to create a group around Actaeon which has almost the same number of figures as the group of nymphs around Diana. This evokes a fascinating contrast: while the faithful animals prove destructive to Actaeon – the hunter has become the quarry –, the faithful nymphs do everything to protect Diana.

Of course, the *paragone* between painting and sculpture is of great interest in this monumental depiction of the Diana and Actaeon myth. I will only refer to one striking advantage of the sculptural depiction in Caserta which is especially obvious in the scene with the dogs around the transformed hunter: the yelping, whining and the baring of teeth might not be very frightening cast in cold marble, but it gets its fitting *audible* supplement in the roar and thunder that surrounds the scene: the big waterfall of the cascade. Thus I will come to the last category: the element of water.

Water naturally plays a major role in connection with nymphs. In the eighteenth century, artistic and hydraulic technology were at a climax. Already in the sixteenth century, fountains had become a form of theatre, with cascades and jets of water coming from marble statues of animals and mythological figures. The most famous fountains of this kind were found in the Villa d'Este (1550–1572), at Tivoli near Rome, which featured a hillside of numerous basins, fountains and jets of water, as well as a fountain which produced music by pouring water into a chamber, forcing air into a series of flute-like pipes, all

45 A comparatively large number of dogs, which attacks and kills the transformed Actaeon, was painted by Parmigianino in the *stufetta* of the *Rocca Sanvitale* in Fontanellato; cf. Thimann M., *Lügenhafte Bilder: Ovids favole und das Historienbild in der italienischen Renaissance* (Göttingen: 2002) 127–129.

46 Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 70 (111, 217–237).



FIGURE 11.17 Nymphenbad [Baths of the Nymphs]. *Dresden*.

working entirely by the force of gravity, without pumps. These water spectacles with their visual and auditory effects were highly admired and imitated over the next two centuries in gardens from Portugal to Saint Petersburg.<sup>47</sup>

Concerning the iconography of our bathing nymphs, the *Nymphenbad* ("Baths of the Nymphs") in Dresden should especially be mentioned [Fig. 11.17]. This impressive building is part of the French Pavilion in the *Zwinger*, begun in 1710 by the architect Matthäus Daniel Pöppelmann and the sculptor Balthasar Permoser.<sup>48</sup> It forms a high-walled space, open to the sky, with an almost square base. The *Nymphenbad* is no bath in the true sense, but rather a water theatre or Grotto Hall.<sup>49</sup> It is visible neither from the courtyard nor from the

47 MacDougall, *Fountains, Statues, and Flowers*.

48 Löffler F., "Die Hauptwerke der Mitarbeiter Permosers", in *ibid.*, *Der Zwinger in Dresden* (Leipzig: 1976) 47; Heuter C., "Permosers Nymphen gegenüber ... Wagnis der Denkmalpflege. Neuschöpfung der Nymphenfiguren im Dresdner Zwinger" in Hermanns U. – Wiesemann G. (eds.), *Kunst und Denkmalpflege. Hiltrud Kier zum 60. Geburtstag* (Weimar: 1997) 109–132.

49 Pozsgai M., "Von Kunst-Wassern, Grotten-Sälen und Badegemächern. Wasserfreuden in der Schloss- und Gartenbaukunst der Frühen Neuzeit", *Fundiert. Das Wissenschaftsmagazin der Freien Universität Berlin* 2 (2004) 46–54.

outside. The visitor who is approaching from the outside, i.e., from the pathway upon the wall, first just *hears* rushing water; a fountain on the platform above supplies a (hidden) cascade with water. Climbing down the narrow steps, he hears the water from both sides, with every step further down it gets louder until, at ground level, he finally sees the cascade, and to his surprise a square opens before him, an outdoor hall, surrounded by high walls with niches and pilasters. Nymphs are displayed in the niches on the north and south sides, and a richly framed pool is embedded in the ground. The cascade rushes into the deep, dolphins and Tritons throw back the water, while two nymphs on the right and left side wring their hair. As noted in contemporary sources, the visitor was splashed with water on his way down to the Grotto Hall.<sup>50</sup> Maybe this should recall Diana who splashed Actaeon with water – the visitor is now the intruder into her and her nymphs' realm.

Generally, water technology was not only the tubes which conducted the water to the spring fountains and the water spouting animals, but the important and expensive aspect was to lift huge amounts of water up into a water reservoir that had to be at least as high as the artists wanted the water to spring up. In the Villa d'Este in Tivoli near Rome, a 1000-metre-long tunnel was dug through the mountain to deviate 600 to 800 litres of water per second from the Aniene river into a high water reservoir, which feeds the fountains. Thanks to the steep topography and the river coming down from the mountains it was not necessary to mechanically lift the water into a reservoir.<sup>51</sup>

Providing water for spring fountains and plays of water was much more difficult when the topography was almost flat as, for example, in Versailles. In Versailles, it was necessary to lift the water from the Seine no less than 160 metres uphill. Therefore, huge machinery, the famous *Machine de Marly*, was constructed from 1680 onwards, which lifted about 2,000 to 2,500 cubic metres of water a day, powered by the flowing water of the Seine itself.<sup>52</sup> That was the amount of water which arrives in Tivoli without a machine in about an hour. The *Machine de Marly* was an integral part of the King's self-representation and a symbol of his power and the good functioning of the French state. Water art, hydraulic technology and political representation were inseparably linked.

50 Crell Johann Christian, *Das fast auf dem höchsten Gipfel seiner Vollkommenheit und Glückseligkeit prangende königliche Dreßden in Meissen [...]* (Leipzig, Martini: 1726) 50.

51 Coffin D.R. *The Villa D'Este at Tivoli* (Princeton: 1960); MacDougall, *Fountains, Statues, and Flowers* 113–126.

52 Brandstetter T., *Kräfte messen. Die Maschine von Marly und die Kultur der Technik* (Berlin: 2008).



FIGURE 11.18  
Fountain of Fama. *Segovia,*  
*La Granja de San Ildefonso.*

La Granja de San Ildefonso was a place blessed with water, at least in the eighteenth century; water flowed abundantly from the mountain springs. A highlight is the Fountain of Fama [Fig. 11.18]. Fama, mounted on the steed Pegasus and in the attitude of playing her trumpet, hurls her powerful jet of water skywards to a height of over forty metres, while several Moorish soldiers fall vanquished at her feet and down the rock, at the base of which are four figures representing the main Spanish rivers.<sup>53</sup> In combination with this sculptural concept, water is a symbol of power: Fama, the fame of the Spanish king and the Bourbon dynasty, holds her trumpet and shoots the water-jet so high up in the sky that it was considered the largest in Europe.<sup>54</sup>

53 Sancho – Aparicio, *Real Sitio de La Granja de San Ildefonso and Riofrío* 40.

54 See the chapter “Gärten des Barock, Rokoko und Klassizismus in Spanien und Portugal”, in Ehrenfried K., *Gartenkunst in Europa. Von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. R. Toman (Potsdam: 2008) 232–275, esp. 247; Añón Feliú C., “La Granja: zwischen kastilischem Barock und europäischem Klassizismus”, in Mosser M. – Teyssot G., *Die Gartenkunst des*





FIGURE 11.19 Baths of Diana. *Fountain. Segovia, La Granja de San Ildefonso. Detail: Nymphs.*



FIGURE 11.20 *Fernando Brambilla, Fuente de los Baños de Diana, part of his Vistas de los Sitios Reales y Madrid (1830).*

The Baths of Diana in La Granja definitely also needs water to become fully effective; however here water was not a symbol of power but instead helps to narrate the tale fully [Fig. 11.19]. This is nicely observed in the contemporary *vedute* by Fernando Brambilla (*Vistas de La Granja*) [Fig. 11.20].<sup>55</sup> Only water allows the Baths of Diana to be a spectacle of concealing and revealing, what is in fact the major theme of Diana with her nymphs. Actually, the Park of Versailles provides an interesting model for the nymphs concealed by water: not far from the Baths of Apollo, a richly decorated basin (still *in situ*) was said to depict the bathing nymphs of Diana. Its central element is a lead relief, 20 feet wide, sculpted by François Girardon in 1668–1671. When the fountains are playing, the nude nymphs are veiled by a curtain of water cascading from above.<sup>56</sup>

*Abendlandes. Von der Renaissance bis zur Gegenwart* (Stuttgart: 1993) 194–198, for the fountain and its height see 197.

55 Reproductions of the historic “Vistas de La Granja” formed part of Fernando Brambilla’s series “Vistas de los Sitios Reales y Madrid” that was developed between late eighteenth and early nineteenth century; for further reading see Sancho J.L., *Las vistas de los sitios reales por Brambilla. La Granja de San Ildefonso* (Madrid: 2000).

56 Usually, this relief is known as the “Baths of the Nymphs”; see Pérouse de Montclos, *Versailles* 337. But an early print refers to it as, “Diana and her Nymphs”. This print shows the relief in reverse. It is part of a volume in which Simon Thomassin, with royal permission, reproduced the entire Versailles statuary, documenting more than 200 sculptures. His collection was copied in full in Dutch and German editions. Thomassin Simon, *Recueil*

In La Granja, any gaze on the almost bared goddess is partly prevented thanks to the water. The spectator has to walk around to catch a (forbidden) glimpse of Diana, so he always receives new insights into the intimate bath, which is, at least for the goddess, not yet a real bath. Diana is getting undressed, one nymph combs her hair, another approaches with a jug of water. The water-jets form a curtain, but Diana herself will not get wet. According to Ovid, Diana's contact with water was the decisive moment:

While Diana was taking her accustomed bath there  
Cadmus' grandson [...] came wandering [...] into the grove.<sup>57</sup>

The Baths of Diana therefore shows the peaceful moments *before* the drama starts. Only numerous nymphs are splashing in the water already, enjoying the last joyful moments before the hunter appears.

In Caserta as well, the mythological spectacle around Diana would remain bland without the gigantic cascade in the centre [Fig. 11.2]. This cascade is not only the stage for the mythological scene but definitely the third protagonist. The roar of the waterfall dramatically underlines both actions: around Diana [Fig. 11.21] the screams of the nymphs, and around Actaeon [Fig. 11.22] the barking and howling of the dogs (Ovid: 'the air is full of howling'). This auditory and sensual aspect in the aestheticisation of water was wide-spread in the monumental fountains of the eighteenth century. Even so, the Grand Cascade in Caserta is exceptional. In its mixture of baroque naturalism, within the type of the *Fontane di natura*, and modern landscape shape, it could recall the cascade in the *Bergpark* ("Mountain Park") of Kassel-Wilhelmshöhe [Fig. 11.23]. These baroque grounds with the palace, the Hercules statue and the 250-metre long cascade were created at the beginning of the eighteenth century.<sup>58</sup> But there are striking differences between the *Bergpark* and Caserta: in Wilhelmshöhe, the statue of Hercules is located at the top of a pyramid, which stands on top of an octagon. In Caserta, however, on top of the huge cascade we find just the spring grotto, a gate built of natural rocks [Fig. 11.24]. From there, the water masses of the *Acquedotto Carolino* plunge down in disorder. The water is not guided as it is in the cascade of the *Bergpark* Wilhelmshöhe. The spring grotto and the natural flow of the water in Caserta

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*des figures, groupes, termes, fontaines, vases et autres ornements [...] dans le Château et Parc de Versailles* (Paris: 1694).

57 Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 70 (III, 184–186).

58 See last: Hoß S., *Welterbe Bergpark Wilhelmshöhe – Die Wasserkünste* (Kassel: 2014); Kress S., *Hortus ex Machina. Der Bergpark Wilhelmshöhe im Dreiklang von Kunst, Natur und Technik* (Stuttgart: 2010).



FIGURE 11.21 Diana and Actaeon. *Fountain, Reggia di Caserta. Detail: Diana and her nymphs.*

might even recall the cave of the nymphs as described by Homer in the thirteenth book of the *Odyssey*:

High at the head a branching olive grows  
And crowns the pointed cliffs with shady boughs.  
A cavern pleasant, though involved in night,  
Beneath it lies, the Naiads' delight.<sup>59</sup>

Thus, two nymph *topoi* are combined: the nymph in the grotto *topos* (the Homeric cave of the nymphs), which was very popular in the first half of the sixteenth century,<sup>60</sup> and Ovid's description of Diana and her nymphs bathing in a natural pool by a cave.

Comparing the Grand Cascade in Caserta with the parks in Kassel and Versailles, it is noticeable that at the end of the eighteenth century

59 Homer, *Odyssey* 1, 102–112.

60 MacDougall, *Fountains, Statues, and Flowers* 37–55; cf. esp. MacDougall E., "The Sleeping Nymph: Origins of a Humanist Fountain Type", *The Art Bulletin* 57, 3 (1975) 357–365.





FIGURE 11.22 Diana and Actaeon. *Fountain, Reggia di Caserta. Detail: Actaeon and his dogs.*



FIGURE 11.23  
*Bergpark with cascade and  
Hercules. Kassel-Wilhelmshöhe.*



FIGURE 11.24 Cascade with grotto. Reggia di Caserta.

neither Apollo nor Hercules are any longer required to demonstrate the power of the king: in addition to the domination of nature, it is above all the art of engineering which serves as a symbol of power and which leads to a new era: the era of industrialisation. The mediation of nature, art and technology represents the kingdom that prospers politically and economically. The most impressive feature in Caserta is not visible: the previously mentioned *Acquedotto Carolino* which was built within just nine years (1753–1762) to supply the *Reggia di Caserta* with water arising at the foot of Taburno, from the springs of the Fizzo, which it carries along a winding 38-kilometre route (mostly underground).<sup>61</sup>

Of particular architectural value is the perfectly preserved 528-metre-long section in tufa, the *Ponti della Valle*, bridging the Valle di Maddaloni between Monte Longano and Monte Garzano. This section, modelled on ancient Roman aqueducts, is made of three rows of arches, 55.8 metres high at its highest point.<sup>62</sup> This aqueduct, however, did not supply just the *Reggia di Caserta* with water but also the San Leucio complex. In 1750 Charles VII selected this place for an unusual social and technological experiment, a different model of

61 Commissioned by Charles of Bourbon and designed by Luigi Vanvitelli.

62 Ehrenfried, *Gartenkunst in Europa* 182.

production based on technical innovation and aware of the needs of workers. The complex was transformed from a royal hunting preserve into a silk production site; industrial buildings were added, which was quite unique in late eighteenth-century Europe. The architect Francesco Collecini designed these industrial buildings, where noisy looms were installed next to royal apartments and a sitting room became a chapel for the workers.<sup>63</sup>

Water gushed down the cascade to the stage of Diana and Actaeon, and a few hundred meters to the west at the foot of the mountain park, money gushed out of a modern industrial system. The nymphs of Caserta thus mediate between tradition and modernity and transpose the perception of allegory, nature and space into a new era.

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63 A new village was built for workers' residences, and a large community of silk weavers expanded it into an industrial town, which in 1789 was deemed the "Real Colonia dei Setaioli" (the Silk Weavers Royal Colony). Charles' son, King Ferdinand, had planned to expand it into a true, new city, called Ferdinandopoli, but the project was halted by the French invasion. Kirk T., *The Architecture of Modern Italy: Challenge of Tradition, 1750–1900* (Princeton: 2005) 39; Rykwert J., *The Seduction of Place: The History and Future of the City* (Oxford: 2000) 85.

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## **PART 4**

### *Music*





## *Venez plorer ma desolation: Lamenting and Mourning Nymphs in Culture and Music around 1500*

Wolfgang Fuhrmann

In musical works of the early modern period, especially in early opera, nymphs were often associated with a bucolic atmosphere tinged with light-heartedness and an innocent eroticism. They may occasionally have been the unwilling victims of divine desire, or suffered from unrequited love, but they were normally depicted as good-natured and prone to singing and dancing.

In this paper, however, I look at a reading of nymphs as creatures of mourning and lament. This reading is present in two outstanding compositions by the leading composer around 1500, Josquin Desprez: *Nymphes des bois/Requiem aeternam* and *Nimphes, nappés/Circumdederunt me*. In both works, nymphs are summoned for the purpose of bewailing someone. In the context of the present volume, we must therefore ask whether such mourning is somehow related to the nature of nymphs, or rather whether it is just a kind of activity they are called upon to fulfil. In what follows, I contextualise the literary phenomenon of the mourning nymph, discuss the way in which Josquin's musical settings modify the meaning of his texts, and suggest a new reading of *Nimphes, nappés*.<sup>1</sup>

Josquin's *Nymphes des bois/Requiem aeternam* (see the text below) is a mourning composition on the death of his fellow composer Jean d'Ockeghem. Born probably around 1420 in Saint-Ghislain (Hainaut), and supposedly of Flemish descent, Jean (or Jehan) d'Ockeghem (more commonly known as Johannes Ockeghem in modern musicology) made his career mostly at the French court, where he was active as a member of the Royal Chapel from at least 1453 until his death. In 1458 or 1459, he was granted one of the most prestigious posts in the Kingdom of France: treasurer of the Royal Abbey of St Martin de Tours (which leads to the pun in line 7 of *Nymphes des bois*: 'vrai tresorier de musique'). Around 1465, he was promoted to *maître de chapelle* to the French king. Ockeghem was not just a courtier with some musical abilities; he is rather

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1 I am very much indebted to David Fallows for reading and commenting on this paper.

commonly regarded (alongside Antoine Busnoys) as the most important composer of the generation active during the second half of the fifteenth century.

Ockeghem died on 6 February 1497. The impact of this event is acknowledged by *Nymphes des bois/Requiem aeternam*, written and set to music by two other important artists. The Burgundian court poet and chronicler Jean Molinet (1435–1507), keenly interested in music and perhaps a minor composer himself, wrote the text, and also wrote a second epitaph on Ockeghem in Latin. Josquin Desprez (c. 1455–1521), the leading composer of the post-Ockeghem generation around 1500, who is personally addressed in Molinet's poem, set it to music. Both were most probably personal acquaintances of Ockeghem. In *Nymphes des bois*, the 'nymphs of the wood and goddesses of the fountains' are called upon to bewail one of the most famous musicians of the fifteenth century: Jean d'Ockeghem. Before we ask ourselves why the nymphs should do so, let us take a closer look at the poem:<sup>2</sup>

Epitaphe de venerable *seigneur* de bonne memoire  
Okgam tresorier de tours compose par  
maistre J[o]Hannes moulinet

Nymphes des bois déesses des fontaines  
Chantres experts de toutes nations  
Changés vos voix fors cleres et haultaines  
En cris trenchantz et lamentations  
Car atropos tres terrible satrappe  
Votre Okgam atrapé en sa trape.  
[Susato: car dattropos les molestations  
votre okeghem par sa rigueur attrape]  
Vray tresorier de musique et chef d'oeuvre  
[Medici: Doct elegant de corps et non point trappe,  
Susato: qui de tropas [= trepas] desormais plus neschappe]  
Grant dommage est que la terre le coeuvre

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2 Josquin's motet appears in Smijers A. et al (eds.), *Werken van Josquin des Près* (Amsterdam: 1921–1969), *Wereldlijke Werken*, deel I, aflevering 5, no. 22. A more recent edition can be found in Lowinsky E.E., *The Medici Codex of 1518: A Choirbook of Motets Dedicated to Lorenzo de' Medici, Duke of Urbino: Transcription*, *Monuments of Renaissance Music* 4 (Chicago: 1968). The piece has not yet been published in the *New Josquin Edition* (Amsterdam: 1989ff.), where it will bear the number 29.18. Among the many recordings, I would single out the beautiful recording by The King's Singers: *Renaissance. Josquin Desprez*, RCA Victor Red Seal 9026-61814-2.

Acoultrez vo[us] d'habitz de doeul  
 Josquin perchon brumel compere  
 Et pleurez grosses larmes d'oeil  
 Perdu avez vostre bon pere  
 Requiescat in pace  
 amen  
 [Tenor (Medici and Susato only):] Requiem aeternam dona eis Domine  
 Et lux perpetua luceat eis. Requiescant in pace.<sup>3</sup>

Epitaph of the venerable lord of good memory,  
 Okgam [= Ockeghem], treasurer of [the abbey of] Tours, composed by  
 master Jean Molinet

Nymphs of woodland, goddesses of the fountains,  
 Skilled singers of every nation,  
 Change your voices, so clear and lofty,  
 Into piercing cries and lamentation  
 Because Atropos, terrible satrap,  
 Has caught your Ockeghem in her trap,

[Susato: for the harsh molestations of Atropos  
 have inescapably ensnared your Ockeghem]  
 Music's very treasurer and master,  
 [Medici: Learned, handsome and by no means stout.  
 Who henceforth no longer escapes death.]

3 The text is extant in the manuscript Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Ms. fr. 24215, fol. 96v (a collection of French poetry from after 1513). I follow the diplomatic transcription by van Benthem J., "La Magie des cris trenchantz: Comment le vray trésorier de musique échappe à la trappe du très terrible satrappe", in Blackburn B. – Ceulemans A.-E. (eds.), *Analyse et théorie musicales, 1450–1650. Actes du colloque international Louvain-la-Neuve, 23–25 septembre 1999*, Musicologica Neolovaniensia: Studia 9 = Publications d'histoire de l'art et d'archéologie de l'Université Catholique de Louvain 100 (Louvain-la-Neuve: 2001) 119–147, here 120. I have added substantial text variants from the two musical sources of Josquin's setting, using the following abbreviations: Medici = Florence, Biblioteca Medicea-Laurenziana, MS Acquisti e doni 666, fol. 125v–127r; Susato = *Le septiesme livre contenant vingt et quatre chansons a cinq et a six parties* (Antwerp, Tylman Susato: 1545), no. 23. Five part books. Quotations after the superius partbook. For a complete diplomatic transcription of the text in both sources, see van Benthem, "La Magie des cris trenchantz" 125–126. See also Molinet J., *Les faictz et dictz de Jean Molinet*, ed. N. Dupire, 3 vols. (Paris: 1936), II, 833 (wrongly dated 1495, and based on the Paris source only).

It is a source of great sorrow that the earth  
must cover him.

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Put on the clothes of mourning,  
Josquin, Pierre [de la Rue], Brumel, Compère,  
And weep great tears from your eyes,  
For you have lost your good father.  
May he rest in peace. Amen.

[Tenor (Medici and Susato only):] Rest eternal give to them o Lord. And  
let the perpetual light shine on them. May they rest in peace.<sup>4</sup>

Today, Josquin's setting of *Nymphes des bois* is certainly one of the most famous works of music around 1500, though it by no means circulated very widely in its own time (being extant only in four sources – two of them admittedly prints).<sup>5</sup> I can only hint at the many layers of meaning here. In the closing lines of his poem, Molinet names Josquin alongside three other prominent composers of the period: Antoine Brumel, Pierre de la Rue and Loyset Compère, to lament Ockeghem as their 'good father'.<sup>6</sup> In so doing, he let the composers acknowledge their historical debt to their predecessor with the metaphorical use of 'father and sons', thus forming a "generation".<sup>7</sup> Beyond

4 Translation by Paul Hillier and Peter James (modified), taken from the booklet to the CD recording of The Hilliard Ensemble, *Josquin Desprez: Motets et Chansons*, EMI CDC 7 49209 2.

5 Moreover, only two of these sources contain the original text. Occasional pieces such as these were often transmitted with a new text more generally applicable or without any text at all. Indeed, the *editio princeps* of Josquin/Molinet's piece, Ottaviano Petrucci's print *Motetti acinque* [sic] *Libro primo* (Venice, Ottaviano Petrucci: 1508, four out of five part-books), gives only the few Latin words of the tenor part ('Requiem aeternam' and so forth), transferring them to the other voice parts as well. The original text of *Nymphes des bois* is preserved in Florence, Biblioteca Medicea-Laurenziana, ms Acquisti e doni 666, the famous 'Medici Codex' of 1518, and in *Le septiesme livre contenant vingt et quatre chansons a cinq et a six parties* (Antwerp, Tylman Susato: 1545), a print postdating Josquin's death (1521) by almost a quarter of a century. Finally, the fragment of a superius partbook in private ownership in Brussels, has the text 'Fletus date et lamentamini', a lament on Josquin himself. See Vanhulst H. et al.: "Manuscrits de Musique de la Collection de G. Huybens", in Schreurs E. – Vanhulst H. (eds.), *Music Fragments and Manuscripts in the Low Countries – Alta Capella – Music Printing in Antwerp and Europe in the 16th Century = Yearbook of the Alamire Foundation* 2 (Leuven: 1997) 95–102. A facsimile of this voice can be found in van Benthem, "La Magie des cris trenchantz" 134–135. See also the remarks below, n. 14.

6 On lists of composers see Fallows D., *Josquin* (Turnhout: 2009) 208–211.

7 See Higgins P., "Musical 'Parents' and their 'Progeny': The Discourse of Creative Patriarchy in Early Modern Europe", in Owens J.A. – Cummings A. M. (eds.), *Music in Renaissance*

this metaphor, the idea of patrilinear heritage established a consciousness of community among composers across space and time. Composers, just as poets or painters, engaging in a continuous – if sometimes subconscious – dialogue with their predecessors seems quite natural to us: Beethoven referring to Bach or Haydn, Wagner referring to Beethoven or Mendelssohn, and so on. But it was a very different thing in the late fifteenth century, where the idea of a composer as *auctoritas* or author of written music, so familiar to us today, was only gradually becoming established.<sup>8</sup> In setting the poem to music, Josquin may have actively strived to establish himself as Ockeghem's most worthy heir or 'son'. This is also the impression one gets from the compositional strategy: Josquin set the first part of the poem in a non-imitative style that harks back to the music of the preceding generation, and has been interpreted by many as a conscious reference to Ockeghem's music (as perceived by the younger composer).<sup>9</sup> The second part, in contrast, is much nearer to Josquin's own idiom.

Coming back to the mourning nymphs, it would appear – at first glance at least – that they were not entirely to Josquin's taste. He seems to have been somewhat at odds with the mythological, seemingly paganizing rhetoric of the poem, for he added another text. Music is capable of a polyphony beyond the means of literature, by the simple possibility of combining different voices with different texts, a technique very popular in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, though increasingly less common in the fifteenth and sixteenth.

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*Cities and Courts: Essay for Lewis Lockwood*, Detroit Monographs in Musicology, Studies in Music 18 (Warren, MI: 1997) 169–186. See also eadem, "Celebrating Transgression and Excess: Busnoys and the Boundaries of Late Medieval Culture", in Higgins P. (ed.), *Antoine Busnoys: Method, Meaning, and Context in Late Medieval Music* (Oxford: 1999) 1–20, here 3; and eadem, "Lamenting 'Our Master and Good Father': Intertextuality and Creative Patrilineage in Musical Tributes by and for Johannes Ockeghem", in Gasch S. – Lodes B. (eds.), *Tod in Musik und Kultur. Zum 500. Todestag Philipps des Schönen*, Wiener Forum für ältere Musikgeschichte 2 (Tutzing: 2007) 277–314. In Molinet's Latin epigraph *Qui dulce modulando*, Ockeghem is also addressed as 'cantorum almus pater'. This epitaph refers to Ockeghem's immediate (but already deceased) contemporaries Antoine Busnoys (died 1492) and Johannes Regis (died 1496), while the French epitaph names four prominent living composers of the following generation. See Molinet J., *Les faictz et dictz*, ed. Dupire, vol. II, 831–832.

8 See Calella M., *Musikalische Autorschaft: der Komponist zwischen Mittelalter und Neuzeit*, Schweizer Beiträge zur Musikforschung 20 (Kassel etc: 2014).

9 See Reese G., *Music in the Renaissance*, revised edition (New York: 1959) 235; Osthoff H., *Josquin Desprez*, 2 vols. (Tutzing: 1962–1965) II, 209; Fallows, *Josquin*, 212, and many others. Elders W., *Josquin des Prez and his Musical Legacy: An Introductory Guide* (Leuven: 2013) 210, claims that the first four measures of Josquin's superius voice quote from the head-motif of Ockeghem's *Missa cuiusvis toni*, though the resemblance seems to me purely incidental.



Josquin took a liturgical chant from the Gregorian repertoire, the entrance chant or *Introitus* to the Mass of the Dead, the famous 'Requiem aeternam'.

Josquin's quotation of the liturgical chant has a symbolic function; meaning is generated by referring to a melody associated (in many cases) with death, mourning and the other world. The symbolism of this is evident: the piece could not have been used in any liturgical context as a replacement for the *Introitus*. Josquin quotes the chant, musically and verbally, in a middle voice, the tenor, often the starting point of musical construction in this period. He thereby conflates a secular, mythological text in the French language, typical for the chanson, with a liturgical chant in the tenor voice, typical for the motet. Moreover, at the very end of the motet, he quotes the final words from the *Postcommunio* (the Mass chant sung after communion) of the Mass of the Dead: 'Requiescant in pace', following a hint in Molinet's text, where the wish, however, is put in the singular 'Requiescat in pace' (this is also the reading in Susato's print).

The piece therefore falls under a late fifteenth-century hybrid genre called the motet-chanson, and its double text, in French and Latin, is in musicological usage given as *Nymphes des bois/Requiem aeternam*.<sup>10</sup> This itself establishes another intertextual link to Ockeghem. The motet-chanson is a genre that is most often (though by no means exclusively) associated with texts of a mourning or plaintive nature. One of the first specimens of this genre was Guillaume Du Fay's *O tres piteulx/Omnes amici eius spreverunt eam*, lamenting the fall of Constantinople in 1453. In 1460 or soon afterwards, Ockeghem composed another motet-chanson, *Mort, tu as navré/Miserere*, on the death of the composer Gilles Binchois. Among the other composers mentioned by Molinet, Pierre de la Rue composed two further motet-chansons, one on the death of Jean de Luxembourg, the other on an unspecified case of death also identified with Ockeghem (see table 1).

10 The most thorough study of the motet-chanson is Meconi H., "Ockeghem and the Motet-Chanson in Fifteenth-Century France", in Vendrix P. (ed.), *Johannes Ockeghem* (Paris: 1998) 381–401. See also Lütteken L., "Memoria oder Monument? Entrückung und Vergegenwärtigung in der musikalischen Totenklage um 1500", in Dorschel A. (ed.), *Resonanzen. Vom Erinnern in der Musik*, Studien zur Wertungsforschung 47 (Vienna – London – New York: 2007) 58–77.

TABLE 1 *A selection of motet-chansons c. 1450–1520 on subjects of mourning and other negative affects*

Composer	Text incipit/Tenor incipit	(Probable) occasion
Guillaume Du Fay	O tres piteulx/Omnes amici	Fall of Constantinople, 1453
Johannes Ockeghem	Mort tu as navré de ton dart/ Miserere	Death of Gilles Binchois, 1460
Loyset Compere	Malebouche la decevable/ Circumdederunt me viri mendaces	Slander of the envious
Alexander Agricola	L'eure est venue/Circumdederunt me undique	Melancholy love
Agricola	Revenez tous regretz/Quis det ut veniat	Death of 'my lady'
Pierre de la Rue	Plorer, gemir, crier/Requiem	Death of Ockeghem, 1497?
Josquin Desprez	Nymphes des bois/Requiem	Death of Ockeghem, 1497, text: Jean Molinet
Josquin Desprez	Cueurs desolez ... Ne cherchez plus/Plorans ploravi	Death; formerly believed to refer to the decease of Louis de Luxembourg
Josquin Desprez	A la mort/Monstra te esse matrem	Preparation for death
Anonymous	Se je souspire/Ecce iterum	Death of Philippe le Beau (1506), text probably by his sister, Marguerite d'Autriche
Anonymous	Cuers desolez/Dies illa	Death of Jean de Luxembourg (1508)
Anonymous	Tout a par moy/Circumdederunt me gemitus mortis	Tenor from chanson by Walter Frye or Gilles Binchois
Josquin Desprez	Nimphes, nappés/ Circumdederunt me gemitus mortis	?

Josquin inscribed himself into this genre tradition by composing *Nymphes des bois/Requiem*. With this in mind, let us now take a closer look at the text. Molinet exhorts the ‘nymphs of the wood and goddesses of the fountains’ together with the ‘expert singers of all nations’ to no longer sing, but to cry trenchantly and to lament, because Atropos has caught Ockeghem in her trap. Atropos, of course, is one of the three Fates, alongside Clotho and Lachesis, thus continuing the reference to ancient mythology.

Another lament by Molinet, on the death of Albrecht the Courageous, Duke of Saxony, who died 12 September 1500 in Emden, invokes the same image almost word-for-word:

Lamentables Regrés pour le trespas de Monseigneur albert Duc de Zassen  
(beginning)

Nimphes des bois, seraines bien chantans,  
Dieux esbattans, deesses des flourons,  
Voeulliés changier vos melodieux chans  
En cris trenchans, angoiseux, fort cuisans  
Et desplaisans, affin que plourons.  
[...]<sup>11</sup>

Lamentable regrets on the passing of Mylord Albrecht, Duke of Saxony

Nymphs of the woodland, well-singing sirens,  
Rollicking gods, goddesses of the flowers,  
Please change your melodious songs  
Into piercing, anguished, very tormenting  
And displeasing cries, so that we may weep.  
[...]<sup>12</sup>

As any poet before the age of “original genius”, Molinet would routinely make use of poetical topoi and even rehash stock phrases in different contexts; this was not only fully legitimate but what poets had to do (and composers also did, in their own way).<sup>13</sup> Thus, the mourning nymphs constitute a topos of

<sup>11</sup> Molinet J., *Les faictz et dictz*, ed. Dupire vol. I, 362–366, 362.

<sup>12</sup> My translation.

<sup>13</sup> This understanding of literary topoi derives, of course, from Curtius E.R., *Europäische Literatur und lateinisches Mittelalter* (Bern: 1948, 10th edition 1984). Several mourning poems in Molinet, *Les faictz et dictz* show how the poet used other topoi. To quote some

Molinet's poetics of mourning. Regardless of whether the subject is the death of a composer or, in Albrecht's case, a prince, the nymphs seem almost to serve as female mourners or *Klageweiber*, a profession familiar to ethnography from many cultures.<sup>14</sup> But why should the nymphs take up such a business? At least in the case of Ockeghem, it would seem more likely for the muses to be called upon.<sup>15</sup> Now the muses have themselves sometimes been considered as nymphs, fountain nymphs from the Castalian Spring, to be precise. But the invocation evidently encompasses not just these: the 'nymphes des bois' evoked at the beginning are wood nymphs.<sup>16</sup>

To understand why Molinet would ask the nymphs to mourn, we may turn to the one book that informed most of his mythological allusions and invocations, as Françoise Joukovsky-Micha has demonstrated: Boccaccio's *Genealogie deorum gentilium*.<sup>17</sup> In chapter 14 of book 8 of this work, "De nymphis in generali", Boccaccio not only informs us about the nomenclature of nymphology, distinguishing *Nereides*, *Naiades*, *Napeae*, *Anadriades*, *Hymnides* and so forth – he also manages, in the space of just a few pages, to twice

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random examples, the time-honoured trope 'Sing and dance no more, but cry and weep' (compare, for instance, *Job* 30:31) is used in "Le Trosne d'honneur" (on the death of Philipp the Good of Burgundy, vol. 1, 39–40), "Complainte sur la Mort Madame d'Ostrisse" (Mary of Burgundy, vol. 1, 173–174), "Le Bergier sans solas" (vol. 1, 209–210, where, incidentally, nymphes and *nappées* are also mentioned in l. 19, 210), 'Les Regrés de la mort Philippes, roy de Castille' (Philip the Fair, vol. 1, 411) and the Latin Epitaph on Ockeghem (vol. 11, 831). Atropos is condemned in "Le Trosne d'honneur" (vol. 1, 43), and in the "Complainte sur la Mort Madame d'Ostrisse" (vol. 1, 170); death personified is also accused in "Epitaphe de Monseigneur Henry de Berghes" (vol. 1, 383). See further the many parallels listed in van Benthem, "La Magie des cris trenchantz" 122–123 and 136–142. I remain, however, unconvinced by van Benthem's subsequent argument for redating Molinet's poem (and consequently Josquin's composition); see also Fallows, *Josquin* 211, no. 53.

14 See the entry "Klageweib", in Grimm W. and J., *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, 32 vols. (Leipzig: 1854–1961), vol. 11, col. 927.

15 In fact, in the Brussels contrafact version (see no. 4) the muses Calliope, Terpsichore, Clio, Thalia and Melpomene are called upon alongside Dryades, Oreades and Charites to lament Josquin. See the facsimile in van Benthem, "La magie des cris trenchantz" 134–135.

16 In his first *Chant pastoral*, written for the marriage of Charles de Lorraine, Ronsard calls the nymphs of a sacred grotto 'des Muses les compagnes' (companions of the Muses), but in a totally different context. See Demerson G., *La Mythologie classique dans l'œuvre lyrique de la "Pleiade"*, Travaux d'Humanisme et Renaissance 119 (Geneva: 1972) 554. See also Curtius, *Europäische Literatur* 236. On the possible identification of muses and nymphs, see also Christoph Pieper's contribution in this volume.

17 Joukovsky-Micha F., "La mythologie dans les poèmes de Jean Molinet", *Romance Philology* 21 (1968) 286–302.

mention their mourning activities. He reports that Homer, in the *Iliad*, names 33 nymphs who congregated with Thetis, who was appalled by the death of Achilles, her son.<sup>18</sup> Boccaccio also quotes a report by Pliny the Elder in the *Natural History*, according to which one could hear the sad songs of dying Nereids at the coast of Lisbon.<sup>19</sup> Reading Boccaccio could have well led Molinet to conclude that nymphs were likely to be involved in situations of mourning. Moreover, in Virgil's fifth *Eclogue*, the dead Daphnis is bewailed by nymphs; this was a text well-known to medieval readers because of the common interpretation of Daphnis as a prophecy of Christ.<sup>20</sup> Equally well-known were Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, where both Orpheus and Narcissus are bewailed by the nymphs.<sup>21</sup> The death of Orpheus may have prompted Molinet's decision to honour Ockeghem, the 'other Orpheus' ('alter Orpheus'), as he called him in the Latin epitaph, in the way he did.<sup>22</sup> If Molinet had access to a translation of the Homeric poems, he may also have noted that in *Iliad* VI, 49f. mountain nymphs help bury Eëtion, the father of Andromache, and that in *Odyssey* XXIV, 47–62 the Nereids also bemoaned the death of Achilles.<sup>23</sup> To be possessed by the nymphs (nympholepsy) could signify poetic or prophetic inspiration, but also – at least in late antiquity – sudden death.<sup>24</sup> Also, the Nereids were

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- 18 Boccaccio Giovanni, *Genealogie deorum gentilium*, book 7, chapter 14: "De nymphis in generali", in idem, *Tutte le opere di Giovanni Boccaccio* 7/8, ed. V. Zaccaria (Milan: 1998) vol. 7, 738: 'Ex his Homerus in Yliade nominat XXXIII, quas ad concussam Tethidem ob mortem Achillis filii sui convenisse dicit'. This is, in fact, not exactly what Homer is describing at this point, but that is not our concern here. For mourning nymphs in Renaissance poetry, see, again, Christoph Pieper's contribution to this volume.
- 19 Boccaccio, *Genealogie*, 740 and 742: 'Namque hec in eodem litore, scilicet Olisipolentium, spectata est, cuius morientis etiam cantum tristem accole audivere longe'. Pliny states that the report came from the Legate of Gaul, cf. *Naturalis historia* IX, 9.
- 20 Virgil, *Eclogue* 5, 20–23: 'Extinctum nymphae crudeli funere Daphnim/ Flebant; vos coryli testes et flumina nymphis;/ cum complexa sui corpus miserabile nati,/ atque deos atque astra vocat crudelia mater'.

'For Daphnis, cut off by a cruel death, the Nymphs wept – you hazels and rivers bear witness to the Nymphs – when, clasping her son's piteous corpse, his mother cried out on the cruelty of both gods and stars'. Virgil, *Eclogues, Georgics, Aeneid*, trans. H.R. Fairclough, Loeb Classical Library 63 (Cambridge, MA: 1916), Latin text on 54, translation on 55.

- 21 Ovid, *Metamorphoses* XI, 47–49.
- 22 Molinet, *Les faitz et dictz*, vol. II, 831.
- 23 See Larson J., *Greek Nymphs: Myth, Cult, Lore* (Oxford: 2001) 23, and 54–55.
- 24 Larson J., *Greek Nymphs* 11–20; see also Wypustek A., *Images of Eternal Beauty in Funerary Verse Inscriptions of the Hellenistic and Greco-Roman Periods* (Leiden: 2013) 157–175.

omnipresent in ancient sepulchral art, suggesting that they accompanied the dead on their journey to the underworld.<sup>25</sup>

Yet there is more to it. Both Boccaccio and Molinet subscribed to the notion that the pagan deities had no real existence in the face of the one and true Christian God. Instead, they could be explained in three ways: as exceptional mortals whose glorious virtues and powers had transfigured them into gods in the eyes of posterity – the so-called doctrine of Euhemerism.<sup>26</sup> They could also be explained as abstract notions of such elementary powers or virtues, and, last but not least, as allegorical figures of such powers or virtues.<sup>27</sup> Boccaccio interprets the myth of the nymphs according to the second possibility. He regards them from the viewpoint of the philosophy of nature: as species of liquid substances, properties of trees, etc.<sup>28</sup> Seen this way, Molinet's epitaph for Ockeghem would imply that nature itself, allegorically represented by the nymphs of the woods and fountains, is bewailing the great composer.<sup>29</sup>

This connects with the ancient notion of *musica mundana*, the harmonious ordering of the existing universe, and there is additional evidence to substantiate this interpretation. Lamenting the death of his employer, the Burgundian duke Philip the Good in 1467, Molinet conceives this poetic trope in the grandest

25 Kramer A., "Nymphen", in Moog-Grünwald M. (ed.), *Der neue Pauly. Supplemente 5. Mythenrezeption. Die antike Mythologie in Literatur, Musik und Kunst von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart* (Stuttgart – Weimar: 2008), cols. 473–484, here 478.

26 Sez nec J., *The Survival of the Pagan Gods: The Mythological Tradition and its Place in Renaissance Humanism and Art* (New York: 1953).

27 There seems also to be an understanding of nymphs as fairies, but see the qualification in Demerson, *La Mythologie* no. 151, 554.

28 Genealogie 738. The chapter "De nymphis in generali" begins: 'Nynphe generale nomen est quarumcunque humiditatum, quod ideo dico, quia humiditates secundum diversitatem rerum, quibus deserviunt, nomina diversa accipiunt [...]'. He goes on to differentiate between nymphs of the sea, of rivers, and fonts, adding: 'Sunt et alie quas nemorum dicunt, et he Dryades vocitantur, eo quod *dryas* arbor seu *quercus* sit. [...] Quas ego non dubitem quin arborum proprietates in generali interpretate describant' (ibidem 740).

29 Such an interpretation is also substantiated by a considerably later poem by Rémy Belleau. Here, a nymph mourning the death of Joachim du Bellay (1 January 1560) declares: 'Pleurez nymphes, pleurez, et vous constaux bossus,/ Prez, mont, iardings, et fleurs, et vous antres moussus/ Accompagnez ma voix, et ma iuste complainte [...]'. The nymph goes on to invoke the whole creation. Belleau Rémy, *Chant pastoral sur la mort de Ioachim du Bellay* (Paris, Robert Estienne: 1560) fol. Bi v. Cf. Hulubei A., *L'Eglogue en France au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle. Epoque des Valois (1515–1589)* (Paris: 1938) 412.

manner possible, in a long lament by Lady Noblesse.<sup>30</sup> First, God and the angels are called upon by the Lady to show signs of the grievous news on the whole earth: the heaven itself must darken, because the lustrous sun has set and is covered by the earth – an obvious metaphor for Philipp's death (l. 14/16: 'Car le luisant soleil resplendissant [...] S'est esconsé et en terre couvers'). The winds are summoned to mourn by hissing like arrows, so that all places – parks, halls and chambers – are filled with their sighs (l. 17–24). Next, Neptune is called upon:

Viens, Neptunus, prince des mers salées,  
Par galées amaine larmes d'oeul,  
Venés, Nymphes, monstres hideux et fees  
Reschaufées, de pluye bien lavées,  
Par navees, arrivés a mon doeul [...]. (l. 25–29)

Come, Neptune, prince of the salty sea,  
in galleys full of salty tears,  
come, nymphs, hideous monsters and  
enlivened fairies, well-washed by rain,  
come by boat, arrive at my sorrow [...].

This goes on for several stanzas: abysses, fountains, the earth itself have to join in this universal chorus of mourning and weeping. And even the birds have to stop their sweet singing. With this stanza (l. 49–56), Lady Noblesse turns to music, at the same moment indulging in alliterations that are supposedly meant to join the *musique artificielle* of poetry to the *musique naturelle* of music proper (in any case, they defy translation, so that I simply paraphrase the content). In the next stanza, musical instruments (ll. 57–61) and terms from music theory (ll. 62–64) are listed in a seemingly random manner, although in fact the first two lines manage to separate instruments *de musique haute* (loud music) with such *de musique basse* (soft music). In the final line, all the instruments and elements of musical learning and notation such as proportions, prolations, and (the musical notes) perfect longs and breves are exhorted to change their tones in order to produce grievous dissonances. Music itself is regarded as a means not of merry-making, as it was traditionally thought to be, but of expressing grief and mourning.

30 "Le Trosne d'Honneur", in Molinet, *Les faictz et dictz* ed. Dupire, vol. 1, 36–58. Lady Noblesse's oration is on pages 37–43. Further quotations are given in the main text with the line numbers.

(l. 49) Oyseaux des champs, chantans chans et deschans,  
 Changiés vos chans, mués vos gargonnés,  
 Les tenebres de nos cœurs anoyans  
 Noians, fondans, fendans et desplaisans;  
 Plaisans montans, rossignos, cardonnés,  
 Net sansonnés, sonans sus buissonnés  
 Sons et sonnetz, sonnés sans soneries  
 Doeul angoisseux<sup>31</sup> en vos sansonneries.

(l. 57) Tubes, tambours, timpanes et trompettes,  
 Leutz, orguetes, harpes, psalterions,  
 Bedons, clarons, clocquettes et sonnettes,  
 Cors, musettes, simphonies doulcettes,  
 Chansonnettes de manicordions,  
 Proportions, doulces prolations,  
 Perfections de longues et de briefves,  
 (l. 64) Mettés vos tons en dissonances griefves.

Even if Molinet does not explicitly refer to the idea of *musica mundana*, it is obvious that the whole universe is engaged here in bewailing the duke of Burgundy. In other words, this offers an extreme case of what John Ruskin famously dubbed the “pathetic fallacy”.<sup>32</sup> On a lesser scale, caused by a lesser event, and most notably with a positive outlook, Molinet’s *La Journée de Therouenne* celebrates a victory of the troupes of Emperor Maximilian I over the French who tried to conquer the town Théroouanne on 7 August 1479.<sup>33</sup> The ancient gods, Muses and demi-gods of music along with nymphs and sirens are exhorted to join in: Clio, Orpheus, Amphion, Mercure, Apollo, Pan, and Arion are exhorted to sing and their musical feats enlisted, such as Amphion’s building of the city of Thebe with his harp. Next come the wood nymphs, here paired (or identified?) with the ‘goddesses of concord’, and accompanied by ‘gods of love and sirens from the sea’ (l. 14–16: ‘Nimphes des bois, deesses de

31 Most probably a reference to Christine de Pizan’s ballade *Dueil angoisseux*, set by Gilles Binchois. The reference might even be to Binchois’s composition, though the composer had died in 1460, seven years before the occasion of Molinet’s poem took place. One might even venture the thought that Binchois’s ballade originated as an “official” mourning composition for some English or Burgundian aristocrat, ballade settings often being occasional works.

32 “Of the Pathetic Fallacy”, in Ruskin J., *Modern Painters*, vol. III (London: 1856) pt. 4.

33 “La Journée de Therouenne”, in Molinet, *Les faictz et dictz*, vol. I, 127–136. Further quotations are given in the main text with the line numbers.



concorde,/ Dieux amoureux, et seraines de mer,/ Chantés de voix doulce, sans point d'amer').

Immediately following this are two stanzas; first another catalogue of instruments, than an exhortation to the choir boys to sing in (probably improvised) counterpoint (l. 25f: 'Chantés, notés, deschantés, gringotés, Petis enfans, qui sçaves contrepoin'). The idea of music underlining the importance of an event is extended here into the mythological sphere, but again against the backdrop of the idea of *musica mundana*.

But there is, the mythological guise notwithstanding, also a Christian reading of this affective response of the universe. 'The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork', writes the psalmist in Psalm 19, and there is a tradition of seeing nature participating in the mourning of Christ's death. The young Clément Marot, in his ballade *De caresme* (*The Lenten Season*), again evokes the topos of music silenced: Pan has to break his flute, the nymphs to leave their woods and betake themselves to subterranean caverns, the birds shall stop singing and heaven shall darken itself 'in these holy and deplorable days'.<sup>34</sup> German readers may be familiar with the *Trauergesang von der Noth Christi* by the German Jesuit Friedrich von Spee, which treats the same theme.<sup>35</sup>

To summarise thus far: the nymphs evoked by Molinet to mourn Ockeghem are representations of natural forces and, as such, an allegory for the dirge of the universe. But they can also be understood, in the context of ancient mythology, as lamenting extraordinary persons, Orpheus in particular. In any case, Molinet used these mythical creatures as a kind of learned allusion not interfering in any way with the Christian beliefs he held to be true. Josquin, then, was not at all untrue to Molinet's intentions when he combined the setting of the text with the beginning of the mass of the dead, the famous introit 'Requiem aeternam'. He merely brought out the Christian subtext clothed in learned allusions.

34 Marot Clément, "Ballade XIV. De caresme", in *Œuvres de Clement Marot* (Den Haag, P. Gosse and J. Neaulme: 1731) 27–29, here 28.

35 'Der schöne Mon will untergohn,/ Für Leid nit mehr mag scheinen,/ Die Sternen la'n ihr Glitzen stahn,/ Mit mir sie wollen weinen./ Kein Vogelsang noch Freudenklang/ Man höret in den Luften,/ Die wilden Thier' traurn auch mit mir/ In Steinen und in Kluften'. Spee Friedrich von, "Trauergesang von der Noth Christi am Oelberg in dem Garten", in Hüppe V. – Junkmann W. (eds.), *Trutz-Nachtigall. Nach der ersten Ausgabe von W. Friessem, Köln 1649* (Münster: 1841, reprint Trier: 1985) 207–209, here 209. Two stanzas from this poem were famously set twice by Johannes Brahms in his *Deutsche Volkslieder* for mixed a capella choir (1864; WoO 34 no. 8), and thirty years later in his *Deutsche Volkslieder* for soprano and piano (1894, WoO 33 no. 42). See Bozarth G.S., "The Origin of Brahms's 'In Stiller Nacht'", *Notes – Quarterly Journal of the Music Library Association* 53, 2 (1996) 363–380.

Another motet-chanson by Josquin, *Nymphes nappés/Circumdederunt me*, probably composed during Josquin's final years in Condé-sur-l'Escaut (1504–1521), has received less attention and has not been performed as often, though it was considerably more popular in the sixteenth century than *Nymphes des bois*.<sup>36</sup> But in the remaining pages I wish to show that this piece is probably much more significant for our understanding of Josquin's approach to this genre than it has seemed until now.

Nimphes, nappés, nereides, driades,  
 [Susato: Nimphes nappes neridriades driades]  
 Venez plorer ma desolacion  
 Car je languis en telle affliction  
 Que mes esprits sont plus mort que malades.  
 [Tenor:] Circumdederunt me gemitus mortis,  
 dolores inferni circumdederunt me.

Nymphs of woodland, sea and stream and tree,  
 come and bewail my desolation,  
 for I languish in such affliction  
 that my spirits are more dead than ill.  
 [Tenor:] I am surrounded by the sighs of death,  
 the pains of hell surround me.<sup>37</sup>

36 For a list of the sources – almost all of them containing the Protestant contrafact (re-texting) *Haec dicit dominus* (see below) – see Macey P. (ed.), *The Collected Works of Josquin des Prez. Critical Commentary to vol. 30: Secular Works for Six Voices* (Utrecht: 2015) 59–62. The piece itself appears as no. 30.6 in Macey P. (ed.), *The Collected Works of Josquin des Prez*, vol. 30: *Secular Works for Six Voices* (Utrecht: 2015) 7–10. *Nymphes nappés/Circumdederunt me* has received attention primarily in the context of the search for the original text and Josquin's alleged use of the cantus firmus in other compositions; see the literature cited in Bernstein L.F., “Chansons for Five and Six Voices”, in Sherr R. (ed.), *The Josquin Companion* (Oxford: 2000) 393–422: no. 28 408, to which should be added Blackburn B.J., “Josquin's Chansons: Ignored and Lost Sources”, *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 29 (1976) 30–76, here 50–53; Just M., “Josquins Chanson *Nymphes, Nappés* als Bearbeitung des Invitatoriums *Circumdederunt me* und als Grundlage für Kontrafaktur, Zitat und Nachahmung”, *Die Musikforschung* 43 (1990) 305–335, and the discussion in Fallows, *Josquin* 296–300. There is an excellent recording by The King's Singers (see n. 3 above).

37 Translation by Leofranc Holford-Strevens (modified) in Fallows, *Josquin* 296–297. It could be argued that “nymphes” is here used as a general term, followed by three subgroups. But I follow Holford-Strevens regarding this as a paratactic order, understanding ‘nymphes’ by implication as ‘nymphes des bois’.

Again, the nymphs are called upon. The first text line is, in the Susato print, somewhat garbled, but the (mytho-)logical way to emend it is to enlist 'Nimphes, nappés, nereides, driades' so that the nymphs of woodland, sea, stream and tree are urged: 'Venez plorer ma desolacion'. 'Desolacion' may be translated as desolation or disconsolateness, meaning that the speaker cannot be consoled. Why this should be so is suggested by the deliberately vague third line: 'Car je languis en telle affliction'.

"Affliction", in modern English, can mean "sickness" or "sadness". In modern French, it seems to describe a more psychological phenomenon. Tobler-Lommatzsch's *Altfranzösisches Wörterbuch* renders it as 'Zerknirschung, Demut' (contrition, humility), but also occasionally as 'Strafe, Buße' (punishment, repentance). The *Anglo-Norman Dictionary* suggests '1. sorrow, affliction; distress, anguish; 2. illness; 3. chastisement', but also 'penitential supplication'.<sup>38</sup> The word is, perhaps intentionally, ambiguous, but the context of the next and last line specifies it somewhat: 'Que mes esprits sont plus mort que malades'. 'That my spirits are more dead than ill' suggests a serious physical affliction rather than just a kind of mental depression. The medical concept of animal spirits in the Late Middle Ages may encompass both, of course, but my interpretation is corroborated by the fact that the nymphs are to bewail a living person. They are not summoned to mourn a death, as in the other texts we have discussed, but to lament the lyrical 'I', the subject speaking. This subject is nearing death and feeling, as befits a late-medieval Christian, contrition (*desolacion*) about his or her sinful life. This interpretation is corroborated by the musical structure.

Josquin's piece is, like his deploation of Ockeghem, a motet-chanson. This means that the French text is again commented upon and enlightened by a *cantus firmus*, a symbolic quotation from a chant. This time it is the chant "Circumdedederunt me gemitus mortis" – "I am surrounded by the sighs of Death".<sup>39</sup> The speaker, although alive, is therefore probably on the brink of death. It has been suggested that this was the deploation for Louis de Luxembourg

38 Tobler A. – Lommatzsch E., *Altfranzösisches Wörterbuch* (Berlin – Wiesbaden: 1915ff.), s.v. Anglo-Norman Dictionary (London: 1977–1992) <http://www.anglo-norman.net>, s.v.

39 A chant beginning with 'Circumdedederunt' was used in at least three other motet-chansons of the time (see table 1), Alexander Agricola's "L'eure est venue" / "Circumdedederunt me undique" (text cited only), Loyset Compère's "Malebouche la decevable" / "Circumdedederunt me viri mendaces", and the anonymous "Tout a par moy" / "Circumdedederunt me gemitus mortis". But of these, only the last piece quotes the same chant as Josquin. The piece is transmitted as *unicum* in Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Musiksammlung, Mus.ms. 18746, a Habsburg-Burgundian court workshop manuscript from 1523, and also quotes the tenor of the chanson "Tout a par moy" by Gilles Binchois or Walter Frye (or probably Antoine Busnoys).

which we know Josquin composed.<sup>40</sup> But it would be a strange deploration to bewail the status of a living subject, while not naming the dead at all. One might argue that additional text specifying the deceased was lost, but the structure of the composition makes it highly unlikely that there was a kind of strophic repetition, much less a *forme fixe*, for the piece is through-composed.

The chant is treated in canonic fashion, that is, one of the voices (the *sexta pars*, as it is labeled in the critical edition) repeats verbatim the phrases of another (the *quinta pars*), transposed a fifth higher. Such canonic structures, surrounded by freely-composed voices that are not part of the canon, are common to Josquin's late chansons as well as several of his motets, though he never employed them in a motet-chanson. Nor, as far as I am aware, did anyone else. This treatment singles out the piece, though the canon in itself is not a very technically ambitious undertaking.

Apart from the conjuring of the nymphs, there are two additional features here that link *Nimphes, nappés* with the Ockeghem lament, *Nymphes des bois*. First, both pieces are presented side by side in what is the first appearance of this chanson with its (presumably) original text in a 1545 print dedicated to Josquin by the Antwerp printer Tylman Susato almost a quarter of a century after the composer's death [Figs. 12.1A–B].<sup>41</sup> They also appear at the very end of Josquin's chansons; there is only one further page-filler before three laments on Josquin follow. The juxtaposing on the same page and the strategic placement at the end seem to suggest a relationship between the two pieces. Note also that the Ockeghem lament is printed exclusively in black notes, to symbolise mourning, while *Nimphes, nappés* is printed in the usual void notation, thus suggesting that no one has died yet.

The second common feature is the liturgical function of their respective chants. As I noted above, "Requiem aeternam" is the introit, the entrance chant, sung at the very beginning of the celebration of the Mass for the Dead. "Circumdederunt me gemitus mortis", on the other hand, is the invitatory or opening chant for the celebration of the Office for the Dead. Both services are to be performed on the same day of a funeral, or an anniversary, that is, the annual liturgical commemoration of a death. There is a clear structural parallel here, and though chants

40 Fallows, *Josquin* 300.

41 The composition was printed earlier by the Lutheran music publisher Hieronymus Formschneider in his *Novum et insigne opus musicum* (Nuremberg: 1537). But in this print, a different (biblical) text, 'Haec dicit dominus', had been adapted to Josquin's music by the German composer Conrad Rupsch. There is only one manuscript source that may be even earlier, the single partbook Bologna, Civico museo bibliografico, R 142. It only contains the tenor, with the text 'Videte omnes populi', and gives no hint as to the sometimes debated question whether *Nimphes, nappés* is the original text – on this see the discussion in Fallows, *Josquin* 296–300.



FIGURE 12.1A *Superius partbook from Susato, fol. xii<sup>v</sup>*: *Nimphes, nappés*/ *Circumdederunt me*.  
COPY AT THE BRITISH LIBRARY, MUSIC  
COLLECTIONS K.3.A.7.

opening with ‘Circumdederunt’ were clearly in vogue in the motet-chanson of the time, the only one quoting the same chant as Josquin is an anonymous piece in Vienna 18746, which might be later than Josquin’s composition.

Musically, *Nimphes, nappés* has an extremely melancholic flair.<sup>42</sup> Its opening melodic gesture drops in falling thirds, more often than not a sign of resignation and feebleness, and at the end (from m. 50 onwards), this gesture is taken up and expanded in what is easily one of the most beautiful moments in the music of the Renaissance. There is more energy in the second line, but only to exhort the nymphs to come and weep: ‘Venez plorer, venez plorer’. Moreover, the ascending fourths of this line and of the next one (in the *bassus*) are at their outset discreetly, but audibly counterbalanced by a dropping triad derived from the beginning.<sup>43</sup> The gesture of lamenting downfall therefore permeates the whole structure and gives the piece a mood of deep inconsolableness.

This is most obvious in the last line about the sick and dying spirits, which runs for the whole second half of the piece: first in the longest melodic drop in the whole piece, a stepwise descent over an octave repeated in several voices; then, triggered by the unexpected E flat in the *quinta pars* (m. 49, 57), the equally unexpected uptaking of the starting gesture which is repeated over and over again, as in a deadlock, and which ‘can be heard as a musical meta-

42 All references are to Macey’s edition, see no. 31. See also Macey P., ‘An Expressive Detail in Josquin’s *Nimphes, nappés*’, *Early Music* 31 (2003) 400–411.

43 Especially noteworthy in the tenor part, where it almost functions as a kind of ostinato: compare m. 2–3, 6–7, to m. 11–15 and 28–31; see also Altus m. 28–30.

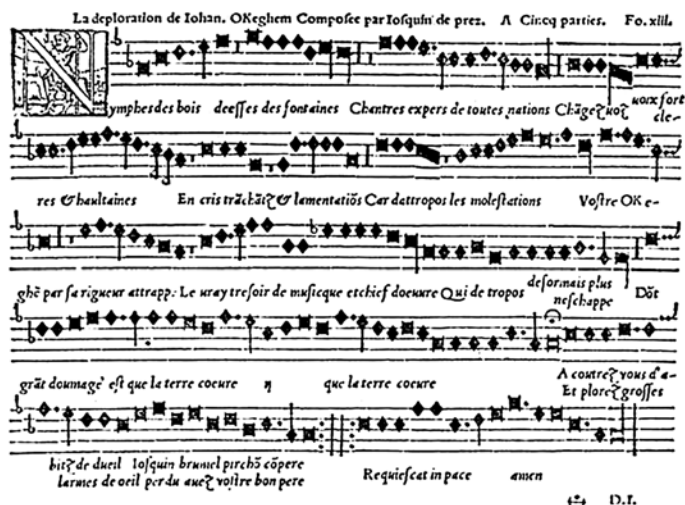


FIGURE 12.1B *Superius partbook from Susato, fol. xlii*: Nymphes des bois/ Requiem.

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K.3.A.7.

phor for disconsolate grief.<sup>44</sup> There is nothing lacking in sad beauty here, and to my mind, the anomalies Fallows notes in regard to the relation of textual and musical structure only enhance the powerful rhetorical effect.<sup>45</sup> In any case, the *cantus firmus* and the general mood of this motet-chanson strongly associate it with lamentation and imminent death.

Now let us return to the question already posed above: who is speaking here? It is a person who is, mentally and/or physically, ‘surrounded by the sighs of death’, and suffers of contrition or repentance. It is someone who was probably aware of the nymphs as Ockeghem’s mythical mourners. To my mind, the evidence strongly suggests that we are looking here at the kind of semi-autobiographical statement so well known from late medieval literature – be it Guillaume de Machaut, Christine de Pizan, François Villon or, indeed, Jean Molinet, and also well-known from text settings by composers such as, again, Machaut, Johannes Ciconia, Guillaume Du Fay, Antoine Busnoys, or, indeed, Josquin Desprez.<sup>46</sup> I will not enter into the debate on semi- or

44 Macey, “An Expressive Detail” 410. Macey provides a far more detailed analysis of the motivic and contrapuntal structure of *Nymphes, nappés*.

45 Fallows, *Josquin* 299.

46 See de Looze L., *Pseudo-Autobiography in the Fourteenth Century: Juan Ruiz, Guillaume de Machaut, Jean Froissart, and Geoffrey Chaucer* (Gainesville etc: 1997); Lütteken L., “Autobiographische” Musik? – Kompositorische Selbstdarstellung in der Motette des

pseudo-autobiography in texts of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries here except to state that the texts themselves offer and indeed invite such readings. In the present case, a semi-autobiographical interpretation is certainly open to debate, as Josquin is not named in the text; the lyrical “I” seems to be the typical “blank space” of the chanson tradition. But circumstantial evidence such as the musical parallel to *Nymphes des bois* and further clues, discussed below, at least make such an interpretation plausible. To be sure, the interpretation of Josquin’s motet-chanson I have provided thus far does not depend on such a conclusion. To my mind, however, it at least seems worth arguing for, however speculative the results must necessarily remain – and as naïve as they might seem to literary scholarship after the “death of the author”.

To be sure, in *Nymphes, nappés*, we are witnessing not the death, but rather the dying of the author, whose feeble, melancholic voice still is audible. Now we must bear in mind that any song normally has two authors. It is possible that the author of *Nymphes, nappés* was a different person from the composer. Jean Molinet would naturally come to mind as the author, but it seems that this short poem is nowhere to be found in contemporary sources devoted to Molinet’s work.

This is, of course, a normal situation in music history. Most newly written texts set to music in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries were of an ephemeral nature, concocted on the spot from stock phrases, probably (but not provably) by the composers themselves. Though the text has a personal touch, its poetic quality is debatable; to my mind, it is below even the most casual standard of Molinet’s writing. In any case it was Josquin who chose to set it, and who, by choosing the invitatory of the Office for the Dead, drew a liturgical parallel to *Nymphes des bois*. And it was the first printer, Susato, who, by juxtaposing both pieces on one opening, underlined this parallel. And it was probably a personal acquaintance of Josquin, the composer Jean Richafort, who chose the *cantus firmus* of *Nymphes, nappés* and its canonic treatment, alongside some quotations from the motet-chanson and other pieces, to write a Requiem mass that has often been considered to have been composed in Josquin’s memory.<sup>47</sup> And it was another composer, Nicolas Gombert, who used the same *cantus firmus* to bewail the death of Josquin in his motet *Musae Iovis*, subtly harking back – in the transposition to the Phrygian mode – to Josquin’s homage to Ockeghem.<sup>48</sup> It seems that Gombert was consciously drawing a par-

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14. und 15. Jahrhunderts”, *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 74 (2000) 3–26.

47 See Milsom J., “Sense and Sound in Richafort’s *Requiem*”, *Early Music* 30 (2002) 447–463.

48 Other composers chose a more straightforward way of establishing this relationship by basing their piece – as Josquin did in *Nymphes des bois* – on the “Requiem” chant.

allel between *Nymphes des bois* and *Nymphes, nappés* here, though he rhythmised the chant differently from Josquin.

Obviously, this piece and this chant were associated in the minds of more than one contemporary musician with the idea of dying in general and Josquin's death specifically, and the idea of honouring and lamenting the great composer. Such an association may have been prompted by the piece as it stands alone; but it may also have been brought about by contextual knowledge about the piece's origin circulating in anecdotal form.<sup>49</sup> A somewhat strange episode in Martin Luther's life proves that such knowledge was orally transmitted, and possibly more. In 1538, Luther reported that the composer Conrad Rupsch (1470–1530) (who had retexted Josquin's motet-chanson as a motet entitled "Haec dicit dominus" to make it fit with Reformation theology)<sup>50</sup> wanted to listen to this piece on his deathbed.<sup>51</sup> The way in which Kaspar Khummer transmitted Luther's statement suggests that Luther also regarded Rupsch as the composer of the music. This is a strange testimony, given that Luther had already sung this piece in 1532, and that the musical print he used clearly differentiated between the composer (Josquin) and the arranger (Rupsch).<sup>52</sup> Moreover, Luther singled out this very composition, as retexted by Rupsch, in praising Josquin in 1540.<sup>53</sup> Is it possible that Luther in 1538 was actually referring to Josquin and that Khummer inadvertently confused Rupsch

49 Josquin was the first composer to become the subject of anecdotes. See Wegman R.C., "And Josquin Laughed ... Josquin and the Composer's Anecdote in the Sixteenth Century", *The Journal of Musicology* 17 (1999) 319–357.

50 See note 35.

51 *D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe, Tischreden*, vol. 4 (Weimar: 1916, reprint 1967) 215–216 (no. 4316), here 215: 'Cantilena: Haec dicit Dominus. 26. Decembris [1538]: canebant: Haec dicit Dominus, sex vocum, a Conrado Rupff compositum, qui cupiit in agone mortis hoc sibi decantari. Estque egregia muteta legem et evangelium, mortem et vitam comprehendens. Duo voces querulae lamentantur: Circumdederant [sic] me gemitus mortis etc., deinde quatuor uberschreien diese: Haec dicit Dominus, de manu mortis liberabo populum meum etc. Es ist sehr wol und trostlich componirt'.

52 *Novum et insigne opus musicum, sex, quinque, et quatuor vocum, cuius in Germania hactenus nihil simile usquam est editum* (Nuremberg, Hans Ott: 1537).

53 The latter statement resembles Luther's earlier remarks on the bi-textuality of this piece. 'Josquin, sagt er, ist der noten meister, die habens müssen machen, wie er wolt; die andern Sangmeister müssens machen, wie es die noten haben wöllen. Freylich hat der Componist auch sein guten geyst gehabt, wie Bezaleel [*cf. Exodus* 31: 1–6; 35: 30–35], sonderlich da er das: *Haec dicit Dominus*, und das *Circumdederunt me gemitus mortis*, wercklich und lieblich in einander richtet'. See Mathesius Johannes, *Historien von des Ehrwürdigen in Gott seligen thewren Manns Gottes, Doctoris Martini Luthers* [...] (Nuremberg, Ulrich Neuber: 1566) 152, quoted in Fallows, *Josquin* 399. I discuss this episode in more detail in Fuhrmann W., "Heart and Voice – A Musical Anthropology in the Age of Reformation",



with Josquin? At the very least, the episode proves that this piece was strongly associated with the *praeparatio ad mortem* by virtue of its *cantus firmus*.

So, is it Josquin who is speaking here? This is indeed suggested by the peculiarities of the reception of *Nimphes, nappés/Circumdederunt me* in the sixteenth century. I propose (admittedly on circumstantial evidence) that it was Josquin himself who conjures the nymphs to bewail his affliction in the moment of imminent death, and that knowledge or at least rumor of this assigned purpose circulated among the musically learned in the early sixteenth century.

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## The Nymph's Voice as an Acoustic Reflection of the Self

Michaela Kaufmann

On the musical stage of the early seventeenth century, the nymph's voice is heard most often in situations of individual crisis, expressed in the poetic form of a lament. When they are afraid, desperate, yearning for love, or sometimes angry, the protagonists encounter or invoke a nymph's voice. The most common setting in which the nymph's voice occurs is the echo scene, a scene in which we hear an echoing voice that various poetic traditions have conceptualised as a supernatural, invisible, and thus powerful acoustic phenomenon.<sup>1</sup> However, the nymph's voice is more than an artistic device, and its cultural significance and relationship to the lament go beyond the tradition of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, where modelling of Narcissus's and Pan's encounters with Echo lays the foundation for the main strands of her literary conceptualisation.

As Alessia Bonadeo has pointed out, the main structural division between a primary speaker that invokes a responsorial speaker or group lies in the ritualised lamentation. Bonadeo traces the references throughout ancient literary traditions and carves out the main structural elements consisting of a primary speaker, the responsorial commiserating person or community, as well as the spectators of the ritual.<sup>2</sup> In her reading, the nymph Echo is a mournful figure, tormented by an unfortunate love-story, and the impaired use of her voice fits as a rendering of the literary modelling of the lamentation. Beyond the relationship to the structure and content levels of the echo device, the ritualised lamentations offer insights into the significance of the responses heard. The ritualised lamentation serves to objectify the individual grief through the performative act of an 'invito al pianto' ('invitation to weep') to the responsorial group that is only enabled to respond after the initial invocation.<sup>3</sup> Represented in a dialogic interaction of the individual and its responding surrounding, the

1 See for example Hollander J., *The Figure of Echo: A Mode of Allusion in Milton and After* (Berkeley: 1981); Gozza P., *Imago vocis. Storia di Eco* (Milano: 2010).

2 Bonadeo A., "Il pianto di Eco. Riflessioni sulla presenza dell'eco in alcune trasposizioni letterarie del 'planctus'", *Quaderni Urbaniti di Cultura Classica. New Series* 71, 2 (2002) 133–145.

3 Bonadeo, "Il pianto di Eco" 139.

responses depend on the individual suffering and, most importantly, reflect on it.

On the operatic stage of the seventeenth century, reflection on the individual grief in a responsorial structure is especially present in the voice of the nymph Echo, which renders the individual crisis palpable on stage in different formations. The newly-developed musical stage around 1600 was one of several experimental grounds where new compositorial devices for the musical representation of human affects were explored. The highly contested innovations introduced by composers, such as Luca Marenzio, Carlo Gesualdo, Claudio Monteverdi or Giulio Caccini, concern – among other aspects – the use of dissonances, the application of the musical modes, and the organisation of melody.<sup>4</sup> The common ground of different musical innovations, which may be subsumed as “stile rappresentativo”,<sup>5</sup> is the focus on a dramatic and affective representation of the text that reflect the increasing interest in the artistic expression of the affective nature of individual human beings. Within this context, composers paid special attention to the tragic affects apparent in the frequent musical settings of laments, not only of mythological-Arcadian protagonists, but also of prominent penitents such as Mary Magdalene.

The lament engaging a nymph's voice, especially if it appears in an echo scene, holds a peculiar position. In addition to Echo's voice – itself perceived as a supernatural phenomenon – the echo device as an acoustic effect pertains to the spatial component of music and often enables the reflection on music as a gateway to supernatural as well as ethereal realms.<sup>6</sup> In this context, the multileveled conceptualisation of Echo's voice reflects impressively on the persuasive power of the then-emerging operatic voice. The significance of the nymph's voice in musical laments is exemplified here in two operatic echo

4 The most prominent controversy between the music theorist Giovanni Maria Artusi and Claudio as well as Giulio Cesare Monteverdi covers the main arguments, see Palisca C.V., “The Artusi-Monteverdi-Controversy”, in Arnold D. – Fortune N. (eds.), *The New Monteverdi Companion* (London: 1985) 127–158.

5 “Stile rappresentativo” is one of several umbrella terms that shape musical styles around 1600, focusing on a dramatic and affective representation of the text. It is not restricted to musical theatre but applied widely to different musical settings, including the soloistic repertoire and the polyphonic madrigal performed in different sociocultural spaces, such as the church, the theatre, and the chamber.

6 See Wald M., “Kanon, Kombinatorik, Echokompositionen. Die musikalische Vermittlung zwischen Himmel und Erde in der Frühen Neuzeit”, *MusikTheorie* 23 (2008) 51–70; and Hanning B.R., “Powerless Spirit. Echo on the Musical Stage of the Late Renaissance”, in Cypess R. – Glixon B.L. – Link N. (eds.), *Word, Image, and Song. Vol. 1: Essays on Early Modern Italy* (Rochester: 2013) 193–218.

scenes from Marco da Gagliano's *La Flora* (1628) and Domenico Mazzocchi's *La catena d'Adone* (1626), as well as in Claudio Monteverdi's non-operatic *Lamento della ninfa*, included in his eighth book of madrigals (1638). These three examples are among the most pertinent cases of the employment of the nymph's voice on the early operatic stage, and they very clearly show how the ethereal and supernatural (i.e. nonhuman) voice reflects and explores the psychological motions of an individual. These three pieces will be analysed with regard to content and form, to explore the connections between the human speaker, the supernatural voice, and the individual listeners.

### The Nymph's Persuasive Voice

The *Lamento* of the nymph Clori in Marco da Gagliano's operatic work *La Flora* was composed and staged for the occasion of the wedding of Margherita de'Medici and Odoardo I. Farnese, which took place in Florence in 1628.<sup>7</sup> The *Lamento di Clori* itself, along with the musical parts sung by Clori, was originally set to music by Jacopo Peri, another Florentine composer and singer. Gagliano and Peri belong to the highly innovative group of Florentine composers, who around 1600 developed the early recitative style for the musical stage, which laid ground for the later staged genre "opera". The Florentine *literati* circling around Giovanni de'Bardi from the 1580s onwards, commonly known as Camerata Fiorentina, based their recitative style on the ancient monody; or, more precisely, on the interpretation of the soloistic performance within ancient tragedy as a 'recitar cantando', a sort of sung recitation.<sup>8</sup> Although it was published almost thirty years after the first experiments with monody, Peri still applies the same techniques in *La Flora* as they are present in his first published operatic work *Euridice* in 1600 – regardless of the stylistic developments initiated by other composers in the first third of the century.

*La Flora* is an allegorical account of the phenomenon of spring, as well as a theatrical interpretation of the political picture at the Medici court, in

7 See the introduction in Gagliano Marco da, *La Flora* (Florence, Zanobi Pignoni: 1628), ed. S. Court (Middleton: 2011) ix–xiii.

8 For the "Camerata" and early opera see a.o. Palisca C.V., "Girolamo Mei: Mentor to the Florentine Camerata", *The Musical Quarterly* 40, 1 (1954) 1–20; Hill J.W., "Florence: Musical Spectacle and Drama, 1570–1650", in Price C.A. (ed.), *The Early Baroque Era: From the Late 16th Century to the 1660s* (Englewood Cliffs: 1994) 121–145; Palisca C.V., *Music and Ideas in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Urbana and Chicago: 2006), ch. VII: "Theories of Monody and Dramatic Music" 107–129; Kirkendale W., "The Myth of the 'Birth of Opera' in the Florentine Camerata Debunked by Emilio de' Cavalieri. A Commemorative Lecture", *The Opera Quarterly* 19, 4 (2003) 631–643.

accordance with the representative requirements of a ducal marriage, with the bridal couple as its fulcrum. The *Favola in musica* tells the story of Clori and Zeffiro, adapted from Ovid's *Fasti* (book v) by the librettist Andrea Salvadori. Venere and Mercurio steal Amore's golden bow and arrow and use them to make Clori, who is described as a 'ninfa de' campi toscani' ('nymph of the Tuscan fields'), fall in love with Zeffiro, the gentle West Wind. Pan, instigated by the vengeful Amore, alleges in Act IV that Zeffiro was in love with another nymph, Heresperethusa. Clori remains incredulous and follows Pan's suggestion to ask the nymph Echo – as an omniscient entity – for confirmation. But the echoing voice that is heard is a 'finto Ecco': a false echo/Echo. Amore tries to deceive Clori by imitating Echo's voice and pretending to be her. The ending of Clori's invocation, which leads to the opening of the echo scene, illustrates the main poetic techniques applied:

[Clori]

Deh, per pietà rispondi,

Ecco bella, Ecco dolce, Ecco gradita:

Dimmi s'io son tradita;

Dimmi se m'è Fedele

Il bel Zeffiro mio,

O pur ingrato, e rio.—[*Amore finto Ecco*] *Rio*.

Oimè, che sento? un'altra ninfa egli ama?—*Ama*.

Un'altra ninfa egli ama, e me disprezza?—*Sprezza*.<sup>9</sup>

The echo scene itself adopts the key textual and compositional techniques common in musical settings characterised by an acoustic echo. On the textual level, the scene revolves around the repetition of words and syllables at the end of the lines. These repetitions constitute a question-and-answer structure between the nymph Clori and the echoing voice.

The *locus classicus* of this technique – characterised by a shift of meaning through the repetition of either identical words or identical syllables – can

9 Salvadori Andrea, *La Flora*, Act IV, Scene 3. The text follows the printed score of the music: Gagliano Marco da, *La Flora* (Florence, Zanobi Pignoni: 1628); see the edition and translation by Suzanne Court in Gagliano, *La Flora* xlv. '[Clori:] Ah, for pity's sake reply, / beautiful Echo, sweet Echo, welcome Echo: / Tell me if I am betrayed; / tell me if he is faithful to me / my fair Zephyrus, / or instead ungrateful, and wicked. – [*Amore finto Ecco*]: Wicked.; Alas, what do I hear? He loves another nymph? – *Loves*.; He loves another nymph, and me he scorns? – *Scorns*'.

be traced back to Angelo Poliziano's *Che fai tu, Eco*. This poem is thematically based on the Echo associated with Pan, but derives its interrogative structure from the Echo that is associated with Narcissus, as both myths were present in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.<sup>10</sup> Poliziano's text, dating to around 1479 and presumably the first echo poem written in the vernacular, strongly influenced subsequent echo poetry on a technical level. But on a content level, it also closely aligned the genre to the lamento of an unfortunate lover.<sup>11</sup>

In the *Lamento di Clori*, the librettist Salvadori applies the common set of echo techniques modeled by Poliziano that we find elsewhere as well: the scene rather shows uniqueness in its internal dramaturgical development. Not only does the echo voice answer Clori's questions, but it actively intervenes in the scene with its comments. After (finto) Ecco has confirmed Pan's claim about the existence of another nymph in Zeffiro's favor, Clori offers an enraged monologue discarding her beloved's frivolity, and is sympathetically interrupted by the echo voice: 'O vana leggerezza, / Sprezzar sì fida amante, / Di cui la più costante, / Non ved'il sol, dovunque spiega i rai. – Ah!'.<sup>12</sup> Except for a closing question at the end of the echo scene, the librettist does not return to the question-and-answer structure, but instead attributes the ability of self-determined speech to the echo voice. Clori's soliloquy is intersected by Amore as finto Ecco, and her speech consequently unfolds according to the premeditated intrigue by Amore. Furthermore, finto Ecco's interventions exhaust the linguistic and semantic capacities of the echo voice, as established by Poliziano:

[Clori]  
 Perfido, io pur l'ho visto  
 Tutto d'amor ardente;  
 Udito io l'ho pur dire  
 Ch'al mio sincero ardor arde egualmente.—*Mente*.

*Mente* il crudele, e d'ogni pena è degno.<sup>13</sup>

10 See Hollander, *The Figure of Echo*, in particular ch. 2: "Echo Allegorical" 6–22.

11 See Sternfeld F.W., "Repetition and Echo in Renaissance Poetry and Music", in Carey J. (ed.), *English Renaissance Studies presented to Dame Helen Gardner in Honor of her Seventieth Birthday* (Oxford: 1980) 33–43; and Sternfeld F.W., "Aspects of Echo Music in the Renaissance", *Studi Musicali* 9 (1980) 45–57.

12 Gagliano, *La Flora* xlv: 'O unworthy fickleness, / to despise such a faithful lover, / the most constant to him, / who does not see the sun, / wherever it casts its rays. – Ah!'

13 Salvadori, *La Flora*, Act IV, Scene 3. The text follows the printed score of the music: Gagliano, *La Flora*, (Florence, Zanobi Pignoni: 1628); see the edition and translation by Suzanne Court in Gagliano, *La Flora* xlv: 'Traitor, I have truly seen you / all ardent with

Here, Amore extracts 'mente' ('he lies') from Clori's accusations against Zeffiro, while Clori forms a consecutive echo by carrying this repetition to the beginning of the successive line, thus combining the poetic techniques of palilogia and anaphora. Furthermore, Amore's intervention provokes a sharp semantic re-interpretation of the morpheme '-mente', which by far exceeds a mere shift in meaning. The attempt to ascribe the intended meaning to Clori's speech as a means to eventually alter Clori's own affective state, from love to anxious suspicion to enraged jealousy, is only realised through Amore's interventions as *finto Ecco*. In this case, the typical question-and-answer structure of an echo scene, often referred to as a 'dialogic monologue',<sup>14</sup> appears in this reversed setting as a monologic dialogue: Clori integrates Amore's speech into her own.

A close examination of both voices we hear on the stage – the voices of the fake Echo and the actual Clori – reveals a carefully mastered contemplation on the persuasive capacity of each voice. During the echo scene, the nymph Clori maintains the skeptical attitude already shown in the preceding dialogue with Pan. Clori disregards the truthful speech that is usually attributed to the nymph Echo, in favor of her own visual and auditory perception. As a response to Amore's first comments, Clori recalls her affective memory, stating 'io pur l'ho visto' ('I have truly seen you') or 'Udito io l'ho pur dire' ('truly I have heard you say'). Clori's insistence on her own perception correlates with her speech in the preceding dialogue with Pan. After being told about Zeffiro's alleged amorous adventures, she refuses to believe what she hears: 'O spietate parole: / Dunque creder degg'io / Perfido il mio bel sole? / Dunque creder degg'io / Ch'in sì care promesse, / In volto sì gentile / Sia perfidia sì vile?'.<sup>15</sup> And she then goes on to reject both the meaning and the affective power of these words: 'Pàrtiti dal mio petto, / Fuggiti dal mio core, / Tormentoso sospetto, / Agghiacciato timore!'.<sup>16</sup>

This dramaturgically important scene – the subsequent actions on the operatic stage depend on Clori's beliefs concerning Zeffiro's faithfulness – constitutes a fundamental reflection on the persuasive powers of the operatic voice. The scene adopts common concepts of the echo voice, such as the attributed truthful speech, the power of prophecy, and the consolation given to the questioner. Clori's voice, however, remains audible, and attains power

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love; / truly I have heard you say / that to my sincere ardor yours is equal – *Lies*.; The cruel one lies and deserves every punishment'.

14 Wald, "Kanon, Kombinatorik, Echokompositionen" 62.

15 Gagliano, *La Flora* xliii. 'O merciless words: / so must I then believe / that my beautiful sun is treacherous? / So must I then believe / that in such sweet promises, / in so gentle a face / there is wickedness so base?.'

16 Ibidem: 'Part from my breast, / flee from my heart, / tormenting suspicion, / chilling fear!.'



from her perception of (stage) reality, in this case the faithfulness of Zeffiro. By performing their persuasive abilities to induce either jealousy or faith, the two voices heard on stage – expressing either Clori's individual perception and beliefs or Amore's intention to deceive her – compete for Clori's affective state; the affective state which, eventually, determines Clori's further actions and consequently the dramatic progress of the operatic work.

Whereas the persuasive power of the echo voice may be captured through its authority as a disembodied voice, coming from an invisible 'locus of energy and thought' that is ascribed distinct powers,<sup>17</sup> the persuasiveness of Clori's individual voice as presented in the *Lamento* needs further exploration. The careful representation of Clori's progression of affective states in the course of the whole scene, including the lamento, the echo-scene, as well as the framing dialogues with Pan, provides further insight into this matter. Eventually, the ending of the scene shows Clori filled with jealousy: Clori starts to despise Zeffiro and by driving him away, she causes the 'campi toscani' to fall to the rule of Borea and Austro, the north and south winds.

However, the change in her affective state is not brought about by the echo scene itself; rather, it is effectuated in interaction through two further dramaturgical means: 1) Clori's jealousy is already staged as an existing affective precondition during the dialogue with Pan at the beginning of the scene. Pan labels her steady trustful attitude towards Zeffiro – ignoring Pan's story about a rivalling nymph – as innate to a 'naïve girl' ('semplicitta'). Her following response indicates a growing anxiety: 'Misera, che sospetto / Già mi serpe nel seno'.<sup>18</sup> 2) More importantly, Amore's intrigue eventually succeeds through a second maneuver: immediately after the end of the echo scene, he brings forth Gelosia from the underworld and installs her on the stage. According to the stage direction, Gelosia 'hurls a snake onto Clori's breast'.<sup>19</sup> Clori's state of desperation, now caused by jealousy, is eventually indeed engendered by an external action, but not by the echo scene. The echo scene fails to perform its function on a formal level – at least if an echo scene is measured in terms of the new insights the scene yields the questioner. In the end, only Gelosia's action influences Clori's evaluation and perception of her own environment, placing her in the (affective) spot required for the premeditated intrigue.

17 Abbate C., *In Search of Opera* (Princeton – Oxford: 2001) 6.

18 Gagliano, *La Flora* xlii: 'Wretched me, what suspicion/ Already snakes through my heart?.'

19 Ibidem xlv; the full stage direction reads: 'Qui la Gelosia non veduta da Clori gli avventa al seno un serpe'.

In this reading, the scene appears as an arrangement of the drama's catastrophe based on the psychological development of the protagonist's affective state. Here, the persuasive power of Echo's voice is a contrast medium used to crystallise the power of Clori's own voice as the representation of a reverberant inner voice on stage. Its foundation lies in the individual perception of the (stage) reality, positioned against the echo voice, which is endowed with meaning by means of its perception as an invisible, supernatural voice. Similarly, Barbara Russano Hanning traces the operatic voice in the guise of Echo – whom she describes as a 'powerless spirit'<sup>20</sup> – on the musical stage of the late Renaissance, emphasising the self-reflective nature of the nymph's voice. However, the genuine limitation of Echo's speech through its reduction to mere repetition also nourishes her rhetorical power to uncover different layers of meaning that are concealed within the words of the primary speaker. The echo scene is framing the self-aware and self-contained speech of the operatic protagonist.

The underlying mechanisms effective in the *Lamento di Clori* may be captured more precisely by looking at the literary model that was adopted in *La Flora*. The scene reflects Battista Guarini's echo scene in *Il pastor fido* (IV, 8), which facilitates the first self-reflective moment of the primary speaker, the shepherd Silvio.<sup>21</sup> In the *Annotationi* to the scene, Guarini extensively explains the use and meaning of an echo voice. The main aim is to create and maintain the illusion that the voice arises from nature, thereby encouraging the technical solution on stage that the primary speaker should perform the echo syllables as well:

perciocche la voce, che vien dal luogo / concavo, che fa l'Echo, è la medesima; che parte, dalle fauci del / favellante, nè altra differenza è tra loro, se non quella, che suol / essere nell'andar, & tornare, distinti solo con la ragione: [...] la voce, che incontra la caverna, ò altra cosa, che la reflet / ta, è la medesima nel riflesso [...].<sup>22</sup>

20 See Russano Hanning, "Powerless Spirit. Echo on the Musical Stage of the Late Renaissance" 209–214.

21 Guarini Battista, *Il pastor fido*, ed. E. Selmi (Venice: 1999) act 4, lines 1031–1084; for aspects of self-reflection therein, see Calcagno M., *From Madrigal to Opera. Monteverdi's Staging of the Self* (Berkeley: 2012) 11–14.

22 Guarini Battista, *Il pastor fido*, [...] *Ora in questa XX. impressione di [...] Annotationi arricchito* (Venice, Giovanni Battista Ciotti: 1602) 323.

151 CLORI

Las - sa; che fô? Che ten - to? Deb-bo dun-que cer - car la morte mi - a? Sì, che me-glio mi

159

fi - a S'in-fe-de - le, è l'mio be - ne, Dar fin, con la mia mor - te, al-le mie pe-ne. O, del va - go Nar-

165

ciso Gentilis - sima, a - man - te: Se quin-ci tirag - gi - ri Tra que-st'ame-ne pian-te, Dim-mi, s'io son tra - di - ta, E dan-mi o mor-

172

te, o vi - ta. Deh, deh per pie - tà ri-spon - di, Ec-co bel-la, Ecco dol-ce, Ec - co gra-di - ta: Dim - mi s'io son tra-di-ta;

182

AMORE  
FINTO ECCO [CLORI]

Dim mi se m'è fe - de-le Il bel Zef - fi-ro mi - o, O pur in - gra-to, e ri - o. Ri-o. Oi - mè, che sen - to?

190

AMORE  
FINTO ECCO CLORI  
AMORE  
FINTO ECCO

u-n'al-tra nin - fa e - gli, a - ma? A - ma. U-n'al-tra nin - fa e - gli, a - ma, e me di - sprez - za? Sprez - za.

FIGURE 13.1 *Marco da Gagliano, La Flora (Florence, Zanobi Pignoni: 1628), Act IV, Scene 3, m. 151–233, ed. S. Court (Middleton: 201), 112–115.*

Guarini clearly considers the echo voice not as a partner in a dialogue, but rather as a prolongation of the primary speaker's voice, as a pure *imago vocis*.<sup>23</sup> This conceptualisation of the echo voice derived from the Narcissus tradition, where the idea of self-knowledge is inherent, gaining persuasive power through

23 For the notion of Echo as an *imago vocis*, see Gozza, *Imago vocis. Storia di Eco*.

195 CLORI  
O vana legge rez - za, Sprezzar si fi da, s - man - te, Di cui la più con stan - te, Non ve'd il sol... do-vun-que spie -

201 AMORE FINTO ECCO CLORI AMORE FINTO ECCO CLORI  
- ga i ra-i. Ah-i. Ti duo - li, Ec - co pie - to - sa, al mio cor - do - glio. Do - glio. Ti duo - li, e'l di - sle al di

209 AMORE FINTO ECCO [CLORI]  
me si ri - de. Ri - de. Per - fi-do. io pur l'ho vi - sto Tut - to d'a - mor ar - den - te; U - di - to io l'ho pur

217 AMORE FINTO ECCO [CLORI] AMORE FINTO ECCO [CLORI]  
dire Ch'al mio sincero, ar - dor ar - de - gual - mente - Mente. Mente, il cru - de - le, e d'ogni pena, è de - gno. De - gno. - Or, che

224 AMORE FINTO ECCO  
pos - so far i - o, Che più l'em - pia bel - tà non m'in - na mo - ri? Mo - ri.

*Qui la Gelosia non veduta da Clori gli avventa al seno un serpe.*

228 [CLORI]  
O, cru - da man di mor - te, Ch'o-ra mi strin - gi il se - no: O... do - lo - re, o ve - le - no!

the absence of its physical origin. The invisibility of a sound-performing body enables its perception as embedded in nature and creates the illusion of a supernatural being: an illusion that in Guarini's reading is directly related to the the degree of self-reflection in the primary speaker. By means of the invisible voice heard, the primary speaker is able to cross the boundary from the physical to the super-sensible realm of human cognition, which results in the representation of psychological motions on stage in the shape of a dialogue with the self. However, the most important mechanism here is the

invocation of Echo by the respective primary speaker, as it is the ritual that opens most operatic echo scenes. The ritual marks the initial point of the staged self-reflection since – in Guarini's postulate – the primary speaker invokes his own voice.

Through music – returning to Clori's voice in light of Jacopo Peri's musical setting – the human voice provides a link to supernatural realms, connected through the natural harmonics that arrange the material and immaterial worlds by means of common vibrating ratios. According to Gary Tomlinson, late Renaissance thought considers the recitative in the Florentine conceptualisation to a lesser extent as a 'mirror of sensible reality but as an adumbration of higher ontological orders, less efficaciously evident in everyday discourse than in heightened versions of it'.<sup>24</sup> Jacopo Peri's recitative style, also used for Clori's lament, appears as an amalgam of musical and poetic techniques. In the echo scene [Fig. 13.1, m. 151–227], the musical setting – a solo voice accompanied by a bass line – reflects in music the rhythms of the declamation. Clori's verbalised despair ('Lassa ...', m. 151–154) is set to music in a manner that imitates dispirited sighing in ordinary speech. Conversely, her longing for death (m. 155–162) is recited on one pitch contrasted by sharp harmonic progression on the words 'la morte mia' ('my death').

Clori's encounter with the echo voice intersects the progress of the musical lament as *finto Ecco* repeats the echo words and syllables in the identical tone sequence. The interjections by *finto Ecco* are followed by a pause that musically separates the sections, with the bass striking a new chord. Thereby, Peri establishes musically a moment of standstill that conveys a sense of Clori processing the information she has been given and gradually adjusting her affective state accordingly throughout the scene. The interjections by *finto Ecco* insert tangible instants of self-reflection unfolding Clori's different stages of introspection, or more precisely: through music's ability to influence the perception of time – used here to prolong a moment – the repetition reveals the ability of self-reflection to act as the persuasive power of Clori's voice. Clori's lament brings the Renaissance idea of human participation in supernatural realms through the voice – as first theorised by Marsilio Ficino – to affirmative ends: in this lament, the 'envoicing a persona' is musically rendered by the nymph's speech as a self-reflective acoustic mirror that reveals the invisible psychological motions of the primary speaker and renders them tangible on stage.<sup>25</sup>

24 Tomlinson G., *Metaphysical Song. An Essay on Opera* (Princeton: 2001) 23.

25 Ibidem 17.

### Representation of Inner Presence

Looking at the nymph's voice as a character's device for self-reflection, another important aspect presents itself: the ability to show an individual's inner presence on the musical stage. A second example, taken from Domenico Mazzocchi's *La catena d'Adone*, serves as a case study for this issue. The plot of the operatic work is based on *La Prigione*, Canto XIII in Giambattista Marino's *L'Adone* (1623). It was adapted by Ottavio Tronsarelli and set to music by Mazzocchi for the Roman carnival of 1626. Although it was published even two years before *La Flora* by Gagliano and Peri, the musical style of the recitatives and arias of the Roman composition are very different from the Florentine. Mazzocchi was one of the composers that developed a more melodious recitative style and introduced distinct song-like arias into their operatic works. On the last page of the printed score, beneath the index of 'arie e chori', Mazzocchi explains the purpose of so-called 'mezz'Arie': to break the tedium of the recitative ('che rompono il tedio del recitativo').<sup>26</sup> The variety of styles as Mazzocchi and some of his contemporaries applied to their operatic works seemed to pioneer the dramatic recitative as a key structural element of the future opera.<sup>27</sup>

For their 'favola boschereccia', Tronsarelli and Mazzocchi designed the entrance of the main protagonist as an echo scene.<sup>28</sup> A closer look at the dramaturgical structure of the whole scene reveals a constant interplay between the two crucial settings for echo scenes: the locus terribilis and the locus amoenus [scene 1, 2 'Rapido a par de'venti', see Fig. 13.2]. A desperate Adone enters the stage, filled with fear of Marte's rage. Marte just learned about the affections between Adone and Venere, his former beloved and now spouse to Volcano. The whole stage setting of Adone's entrance is created through the protagonist's speech, commenting on his affective state, as well as his surroundings. We learn about the wind ('vento'), forest ('bosco') and cave ('cavo'/'speco'), while following Adone's personal crisis on the stage. In addition to the physical setting, Adone sees himself surrounded by shadows of horror: 'poiché fuggo i

26 Mazzocchi Domenico, *La catena d'Adone* (Venice, Alessandro Vincenti: 1626) [127].

27 See for this issue Reiner S., "'Vi sono molt'altre mezz'Arie ...'", in Powers H. (ed.), *Studies in Music History. Essays for Oliver Strunk* (Princeton: 1968) 241–258; Gianturco C., "Nuove Considerazioni su 'Il tedio del recitativo' delle prime opere romane", *Rivista italiana di musicologia* 17, 2 (1982) 212–239.

28 See the genre specification on the title page in Tronsarelli Ottavio, *La catena d'Adone* (Roma, Francesco Corbelletti: 1626).

This image shows folios 13 and 14 of a handwritten musical score. Folio 13 (left) begins with a large 'R' and the tempo marking 'Allegro'. The music is written for a single melodic line with a basso continuo line below. The lyrics are in Italian. Folio 14 (right) continues the musical piece, featuring similar notation and Italian lyrics. The manuscript is written in a clear, early modern hand.

This image shows folios 15 and 16 of the same musical manuscript. Folio 15 (left) continues the musical piece, with the tempo marking 'Allegro' still present. The notation and lyrics are consistent with the previous pages. Folio 16 (right) shows the continuation of the piece, with the tempo marking 'Allegro' appearing again. The manuscript is written in a clear, early modern hand.

FIGURE 13.2 Domenico Mazzocchi, *La catena d'Adone* (Venice, Alessandro Vincenti: 1626), Act I, Scene 2, 13–16.

furori, / e mi cingon tra boschi ombre d'orrori'.<sup>29</sup> These shadows, which follow Adone through the forest and take the shape of illusions, causing him to experience his fear of Marte's revenge as a tangible presence, are pervasive through his imagination: 'Deh (lasso) che vegg'io, / e qual ombra spirante / segue il mio piè tremante?'.<sup>30</sup>

In the printed libretto, the *argomento* opening the scene reveals that Adone's perception belongs to the realm of his imagination, rather than to the stage reality. It reads: 'Il quale [Adone] hà tema sì grande, che gli cagiona alla vista varie illusioni, nè vi è cosa nella Scena, che non gli rappresenti imagine di spavento'.<sup>31</sup> Taking the *argomento* seriously, the scene (including the stage setting) unfolds in Adone's imagination, a realm that is only accessible to the audience because it is represented through Adone's speech.

Adone himself tries to debunk the self-deception, albeit unsuccessfully: 'O mio spirito insano, / dubbioso di me tremo, / e, fatt'ombra di orror, / l'ombra mia temo'.<sup>32</sup> Raising his own voice, Adone responds to the illusions of the omnipresent horrors and finds the cause of his strange perceptions in his current affective state of fear. Although momentarily falling back into a series of delusions, the *passus* already hints at a sense of self-knowledge in the operatic protagonist. As helplessness and desperation increase, a 'flebil voce' ('gentle' or 'faint voice') resounding in the forest succors Adone's voice. Although he initially also ascribes this voice to his insanity, he eventually starts to pay attention, and by doing so, opens the echo scene.

The libretto also employs the techniques and the traditional poetic way of using the echo syllables and words discussed above:

[Adone]  
Ma chi fra tanto sia,  
ch'in sì remoti boschi  
m'additi il giusto fin dell'error mio?—[Echo] Io.

E chi sei tu, che meco  
parli da cavo sen d'ignoto speco?—Eco.

29 Tronsarelli, *La catena* 1, 2: 'As I flee the furies, / and between forests shadows of horror are girding me'.

30 Ibidem: 'What do I see / what swarming shadow / is following my tremulous foot?'

31 Ibidem: 'He [Adone] is full of fear that effectuates seeing him various illusions, that are not things on stage, thus not showing him images of fright'.

32 Ibidem: 'Oh, my insane spirit, / doubtfully I tremble, / and, the shadow of horror made [by my spirit], / my own shadow I fear'.



Quella, ch'à l'altrui voglie  
con presaghe risposte il ver discioglie?—*Scioglie*.

Ah perch'in tanti affanni  
di trovar il suo ben l'alma dispera?—*Spera*.

E sia, che lieto il core  
tra sì folt'ombre il suo bel sole ammiri?—*Miri*.

Ma quando avvenir dée,  
che per Venere in sen gioia m'alloggi?—*Hoggi*.<sup>33</sup>

Adone's creation of the imaginary stage setting contains the basic features that fit the standard appearance of an echo voice: a presumably secluded area equipped with forests, rocks and caves. The main motifs of the figure of the nymph Echo are evoked in a similar, but less elaborated way: her prophetic powers ('presaghe risposte', 'foreboding answers') and the consoling effect of her voice ('che lieto il core', 'how delighted the heart') appear even as a catalogue of attributions within the libretto, a catalogue that likewise structure the scene.

The musical setting of the echo scene is rather unspectacular, each time repeating the echo syllables by the exact tone sequence [Fig. 13.2]. Again, the dramaturgical structure of the whole scene is intriguing: Adone's monologue is characterised by the continuous succession of different tonalities, melodic qualities, and modes of ornamenting single words. All of this is used to express the different affects represented in the text, such as anxiety, desperation, and longing. Mazzocchi indicates the opening of the echo scene itself by setting a musical colon: a pause explicitly marked in the score with the instruction 'lasciate' (to translate as the indication of a pause), in combination with a sudden tonal shift from the predominant A to B as the main tonal realm [Fig. 13.2, m. 55–56]. By means of this prearrangement, the rather conventional echo scene is staged musically as a calm moment that contrasts the rapid sequence of affective states that precedes it during Adone's monologue.

Besides this proposed reading of the soliloquy, unfolding completely in the realm of Adone's imagination and conveyed through Adone's voice, the echo scene may be read as an extension of the monologue to a "dialogic monologue" in Guarini's sense. The brief interlude in the protagonist's delusion, brought on by the attempt to re-focus his perception to the actual stage reality with his

33 Ibidem.

own voice, results in failure. The self-enhancement is approached by listening to a second voice, presented as an external voice; this second voice allows Adone to regain confidence and eventually alter his affective state, an alteration that his own voice was incapable to perform.

The different capacities of the inner and the external voice are expressed in their respective musical settings. During the soliloquy, the sole moment of musical relaxation may be found in the setting of the phrase 'Segui, segui il camino' [Fig. 13.2, m. 32–35], where Mazzocchi applies a stable tonal sequence in the basso continuo. This phrase follows the first question Adone asks in the scene: 'E qual ombra spirante / segue il mio piè tremante?', to which he responds realising that the 'shadow of horror' ('ombra di orror') is produced by his own 'insane mind' ('spirito insano'). Adone's inner voice gives him confidence for only one phrase, musically indicated by the abrupt ending of the phrase on the dominant D [Fig. 13.2, m. 35], and followed by the readopted musical representation of Adone's affective meandering. In comparison to the capacity of the inner voice, the answers of the external voice during the echo scene develop a new affective state that dominates the entire following aria ('Dunque piagge ridenti') performed by Adone.

Considering the dramaturgical structure of the whole scene, the echo voice may be read as Adone's own voice. The conversion of an inner monologue into a dialogue in particular refers to a concept that is closely connected to the echo voice: the representation of thought, or the stream of consciousness of an individual in relation to the world.<sup>34</sup> In Adone's case, we might speak of an inclusion of his self-consciousness into the stage reality, mediated through the figure of Echo. The whole scene is located, as clarified by the prefacing *argomento*, in the realm of the imaginary and is focused on Adone's affective state. This scene reaches its climax in and through the quasi-dialogical structure of the echo scene, culminating in the aria 'dunque piagge ridenti' that, eventually, clearly defines the locus amoenus as the predominant setting.

The inner presence revealed by the nymph's voice depends on the physical absence of a sound-producing body on the operatic stage, making relevant the question of who is actually singing the echo parts. A general look at the printed libretti and scores that employ echo scenes shows that there is a formal incoherence in terms of including or excluding Echo as an independent *interlocutrice* among the other protagonists. In *La catena d'Adone*, Echo is listed; however, in, by way of example, Claudio Monteverdi's *Orfeo* (Venice: 1609) – which contains two famous echo scenes – the nymph is missing from the table

34 See the elaboration on this concept in Wald, "Kanon, Kombinatorik, Echokompositionen" 59, 62, 67–68.

of characters. Going back to contemporary approaches to the nymph's voice, we can see that Guarini (see quotation from his *Annotationi*, given above) clearly states that the echo voice should be produced – for the purposes of creating the theatrical effect of illusion – by the primary speaker. Beyond the technical realisation of the echo effect on stage, Guarini gives a subtle comparison that elucidates the question about the origin of the voice that is heard, and furthermore clarifies the question of who is supposed to hear and, as a consequence, listen to it:

Il medesimo si vede chiaro se al / tri getta un sasso in acqua stagnante.  
Que'giri che si partono dal / centro, che fu percosso, se s'incontrano in cosa  
vicina, che gli ri / fletta, tornano al centro d'onde partireno, que'medesimi  
che / erano in sostanza quando partirono. cosi la voce nè più nè man / co.<sup>35</sup>

Just as the waves produced by a stone thrown into the water are forced, when they strike an obstacle, by the laws of nature to return to their point of origin – in a transformed shape – the circles of the echo voice are limited by and dependent upon their originating center. When this reading is applied to Adone's encounter with an invisible voice, the *imago vocis* forfeits its quality as a pure mirror of the world, of material things; rather, the voice is the performative surface of Adone's imaginary reality: when the first question occurs to Adone, the answer already floats in the pond of his consciousness.

In the early modern 'discourse of the imaginary', as elaborated upon by Klaus Krüger with regard to the image in devotional art,<sup>36</sup> the ontological status of the artwork in question, the perceived "stimulus", undergoes a re-definition. The artwork no longer simply presents a certain topic – a vision or an affect – through resemblance, aimed at ensuring an effect in the recipient. The artwork could now include different 'modes of representation', which are framed by the artwork's inherent ambivalence,<sup>37</sup> mediating between tangible and supernatural realms. Hans Blumenberg described the interest in sensory evidence of the supernatural as the objective to reveal 'was dem Zuschauer des Weltschauspiels bis dahin unsichtbar blieb' ('what hitherto had been invisible

35 Guarini, *Il pastor fido*, *Annotationi* 323.

36 Krüger K., "Authenticity and Fiction: On the Pictorial Construction of Inner Presence in Early Modern Italy", in Falkenburg R.L. – Melion W.S. – Richardson T.M. (eds.), *Image and Imagination of the Religious Self in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Turnhout: 2007) 37–69.

37 Ibidem 68.

to the audience of the spectacle of the world').<sup>38</sup> The difference in the ontological status of music as resemblance and music as representation is determined, as Gary Tomlinson puts it, by the 'borderline between verisimilitude and its absence'.<sup>39</sup> In the so-called "stile rappresentativo", resemblance is achieved by carefully retracing the (affective) content of the words with musical gestures; whereas the representational mode would be the use of a musical set of cues that only during the performance of the composition constructs its meaning.

Mazzocchi masters Adone's lament with a careful application of different modes of musical representation [see again Fig. 13.2]. In the first part, which precedes the echo scene, Mazzocchi starts the lament – in order to express Adone's fear – with agitation, immediately crossing the octave G – g, reaching the high tone of the phrase in the third measure on the words denoting the reason for his escape: Marte's rage. However, the aforementioned musical semicolon that follows not only opens the echo scene, but undertakes a shift of the mode of representation. Through the abrupt shift in the tonality and its sudden stability, Mazzocchi creates a somehow mystical ambiance. This way, the musical evocation of the expressive content of single words retreats completely. The setting of the echo scene establishes a space for the ambivalence of the two voices heard, seemingly originating from the physically present Adone and from an invisible locus, but pointing at the imaginary actuality of Adone's inner presence as a supernatural realm. By returning to the question of who is supposed to hear and listen to the supernatural voice, Guarini's statement that the 'reflesso torna all'orecchio di chi la formò' ('the reflection returns to the ear of whom that produces it') appears to point to the ambivalence of outward- and inward-directed facets of the human being itself. The nymph's voice serves as a representational code that only becomes intelligible through the application of the receiver's own imaginative ability, which in the very moment of the performance is shared between with the protagonist and the listener.

### *Il Pianto della Ninfa*

The notion of the nymph's voice as an independent sign for self-reflection and inner presence is not restricted to echo scenes. With this new perspective on

38 Blumenberg H., *Die Legitimität der Neuzeit. Erneuerte Ausgabe* (Frankfurt am Main: 1988) 424.

39 Tomlinson G., "Pastoral and musical magic in the birth of opera", in Bauman T. – McClymonds P. (eds.), *Opera and the Enlightenment* (Cambridge: 1995) 7–20, here 7. See also Carter T., "Resemblance and Representation: Towards a New Aesthetic in the Music of Monteverdi", in Fenlon I. – Carter T. (eds.), *Con che soavità: Studies in Italian Opera, Song, and Dance, 1580–1740* (Oxford: 1995) 118–134.

the field of relationships between echo scenes, the operatic voice, and the representation of self, Claudio Monteverdi's *Lamento della ninfa* is an example of how key aspects of the nymph's voice were applied around 1600. The famous *Lamento* was published in Monteverdi's eighth book of madrigals, printed in 1638 as *Madrigali guerrieri, et amorosi*. The piece is divided into three sections, which distinguish different modes of performance: two sections with a chorus of three male voices stage the narrative parts framing the 'pianto della ninfa' of a solo soprano in the middle section of the piece, the actual lamento, fashioned in a dramatic mode.<sup>40</sup>

Monteverdi included a short introduction in the partbook of the basso continuo, concerning the 'modo di rappresentare il presente canto', in which he reflects on the different notational presentations he deployed for each part's respective performative purposes. The chorus sections one and three are presented in parts, each singer as well as the basso continuo player only see their own musical part in their partbook, whereas the 'pianto della ninfa' is presented as a score [see Fig. 13.3]. The chorus sections should be sung 'al tempo della mano', applying a regular beat common in polyphonic settings. The 'pianto della ninfa', however, should be performed by the soprano 'a tempo dell'affetto del animo', which is – translated freely – to follow her passions, and technically results in a more deliberate interpretation of the notated rhythmical structure. Accordingly, the three male voices should commiserate with the nymph's lament in faint voices. The lament depicts the tragedy of a lover's grief, with the affective pendulum swinging back and forth between the directions of despair, self-pity, jealousy, and anger. Throughout the 'Pianto', the male chorus repeats its commiserating part ('Miserella, ah più no, no, / tanto gel soffrir non può') or fragments of it continuously, overlapping with the nymph's speech.

The lamento's intriguing effect lies in its impression of anonymity: the story of unfulfilled love is told in the most generalised narrative, and the singers appear as de-personified protagonists, reduced to their function of transmitting voices. In contrast to the anonymity on a content level, Monteverdi fashioned the lamento on the structural level as a dramatic scene that immediately forces the listener into the role of a spectator. Whether it was performed scenically or not, the piece itself contains – in the guise of the narrative section's framing and commenting on the 'pianto' – its own stage. The multilayered structure, in which we have the nymph as the main protagonist and a group of observers as another part of the performing personnel, puts the main focus on the lamenting voice of the nymph.

40 Monteverdi Claudio, *Madrigali guerrieri, et amorosi* (Venice, Alessandro Vincenti: 1638) basso continuo, 55.

By qualifying the lamenting woman as a nymph, an intangible being, the idea of human participation in supernatural realms through voice again is present; however, in contrast to the laments in *La catena d'Adone* and *La Flora*, it is not a part of the secluded stage representation, but directly drawn to the audience. The pure voice displayed in the *Lamento* invites the listener to participate affectively in the tragedy, and likewise forces him – because of its anonymity – to furnish the scene through his own imaginative power, constructing an inner presence arising from his own lamenting voice. This is even enhanced musically through the continuous repetition of the descending tetrachord as an ostinato bass line, later on becoming 'an emblem of lament',<sup>41</sup> in the basso continuo [see the basso continuo part in Fig. 13.3]. The ostinato, as Tomlinson explicates, is a 'musical structure filled with extramusical emblematic significance' that is not related to the words of the lament by resemblance, but by representation.<sup>42</sup> The connection to what it represents lies in a bond established 'inside knowledge, between the *idea of one thing* and the *idea of another*'.<sup>43</sup> This knowledge may be captured through the pure voice of the nymph, and its invitation of the listener to participate with his imaginative power. The ostinato, heard once in full length before the 'pianto della ninfa' begins, stages the affective states of the lovelorn nymph, which Monteverdi perpetuates by the ostinato as inevitable facets of human nature.

Like the voice of Echo (real or pretended) reverberates the words back to their origin, so the very act of engaging with the nymph's voice refers the speaker back to him or herself, shifting the focus from the fairy-like, miraculous setting, to an amplification of and confrontation with the mental anguish of the individual. The nymph's voice in *La Flora*, *La catena d'Adone* and the *Lamento della ninfa* – whether it appears as the lamenting protagonist or, as in the case of Clori and Adone, as the sympathetic companion – shows its rendering as a supernatural mirror that reflects human psychological motions. A reflection that is not only poignantly incorporated into the textual narrative as a mere allegory of depicted supernatural realms, but that is rather portrayed through music's capacity to actual representation: a representation that renders the staged selves though the nymph's voice as punctually palpable for the individual listener.

41 Rosand E., "The Descending Tetrachord: An Emblem of Lament", *The Musical Quarterly* 65, 3 (1979) 346–359; Tomlinson G., *Music in Renaissance Magic. Toward a Historiography of Others* (Chicago: 1993) 239–241.

42 Tomlinson, *Music in Renaissance Magic* 240.

43 Ibidem 240–241.

54

Modo di rappresentare il presente canto.

**L**E tre parti, che cantano fuori del pianto della Ninfa; si sono così separatamente poste, perche si cantano al tempo della mano: le altre tre parti, che vanno enmiserando in debole voce la Ninfa, si sono poste in partitura, accio seguitano il pianto di essa, qual uia cantato a tempo dell'affetto del animo, & non a quello dela mano.

A Tre Voci. Doi Tenori, e Basso      Basso Continuo.

On hauea Febo ancora.

Lamento della Ninfa.

Mor      Amor

Dicca      il cielmi-

Dicca      il cielmi-

Dicca      il cielmi-

FIGURE 13.3A Claudio Monteverdi, *Madrigali guerrieri, et amorosi* (Venice, Alessandro Vincenti: 1638), beginning of *Lamento della Ninfa*, 54.

56 Basso Continuo.

Amor Amor doue doue la fe ch'el traditor ch'el traditor giu-  
rando il piè fermò  
rando il piè fermò  
rando il piè fermò

rò fa che ritorni il mio Amor com'ei pur fa ò ò tu m'ancidi chio  
miserella  
miserella  
miserella

Ottavo Libro de Madregali di Claudio Monte Verde. I 159

FIGURE 13.3B Claudio Monteverdi, *Madrigali guerrieri, et amorosi* (Venice, Alessandro Vincenti: 1638), *beginning of Lamento della Ninfa*, 55.



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**PART 5**

*Aetiology and Antiquarianism*





# Founding Sisters: Nymphs and Aetiology in Humanist Latin Poetry

*Christian Peters*

venatrici cuidam  
quibusvisque botauris

## Mythology and Rape Culture? Nymphs as Victims of Sexual Offence in Ovid

Being a nymph in Ovidian poetry is a tough draw. There are at least fifty instances of rape or use of force in sexual encounters in the *Metamorphoses*, a large number of them committed against nymphs (with only one perpetrated by a nymph), and the ensuing transformation happens more often than not as a punishment or retribution by a god or goddess in indignation rather than as an act of mercy to spare the victim shame.<sup>1</sup> Ovidian nymphs, both as *numina* – divine beings – and narrative entities usually have quite a short life cycle and narrow boundaries to their respective domains.<sup>2</sup> Unlike the gods of the Olympian pantheon and the tireless heroes of the heroic age, they do not figure in the poem for long; they usually come into being, and then, shortly thereafter,

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- 1 Curran L.C., “Rape and Rape Victims in the Metamorphoses”, *Arethusa* 11 (1978) 213–241; on metamorphosis as a means for gods to get back at those who denied themselves to the gods, see ibidem 218–219. Richlin A., “Reading Ovid’s Rapes”, in Richlin A. (ed.), *Pornography and Representation in Greece and Rome* (New York – Oxford: 1992) 158–179; on metamorphosis as an act of mercy, see ibidem 165. Cf. also the article by Karl Enenkel in this volume. For formal and structural aspects of stories of rape in the *Metamorphoses*, see Stirrup B.E., “Techniques of Rapes. Variety of Wit in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*”, *Greece & Rome* 24, 2 (1977) 170–184; on metamorphosis as an act of mercy see also Erbse H., “Beobachtungen über die Funktion der Metamorphose bei Ovid”, *Hermes* 131 (2003) 323–349.
  - 2 Larson J., *Greek Nymphs: Myth, Cult, Lore* (Oxford et al.: 2001) 3–6.

are dispatched and rendered immortal in one strike – that is, by metamorphosis and aetiology.<sup>3</sup> Unlike the *Fasti*'s focus on religion and cultic practice, the aetiologies of the *Metamorphoses* are mostly concerned with nature and topography. The textbook cases of defiled nymphs undergoing metamorphosis are plants or trees (Daphne, Syrinx), birds (Philomela), other animals (Callisto, Io), and springs or other smaller bodies of water (Cyane, albeit mourning another character's rape); other types of metamorphic results include astronomical constellations (Callisto, in a second stage of transformation).<sup>4</sup> Now, it goes without saying that Ovid's epic and its multitudes of singular myths were, from the high Middle Ages onward, one of the most widely read and widely known texts among men of letters, and the multitude of interpretations in the form of moral or physical allegory of the accounts of myths handed down to or invented by Ovid bears witness that each of them could be singled out and stripped down to the status of a mythographic item.<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, the instant creation and subsequent dissolution of countless minor divine beings could serve as a model and inspiration for a reader and scholar's own imitation and emulation of Ovidian myth and aetiology. Boccaccio already created his own

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- 3 See Myers K.S., *Ovid's Causes. Cosmogony and Aetiology in the Metamorphoses* (Ann Arbor: 1994) esp. 95–132, where Myers argues that books 14 and 15 of the *Metamorphoses* serve as a junction between the natural aetiology of the metamorphoses and the cultural aetiology of the *Fasti*, which either interpret or invent myth to explain the cultural reality of Italy as it was perceived by Ovid's contemporaries. Cf. also Tissol G., *The Face of Nature. Wit, Narrative and Cosmic Origins in Ovid's Metamorphoses* (Princeton: 1997) 167–214, esp. 168–169: 'The Romans' awareness of the mons Tarpeius in their ordinary visits to the Capitoline may be changed by their reading of Propertius, their experience of their city influenced by his artistic meanings. Ovid offers a parallel to his own readers in those characters within the work who, observing a bird or other creature of the natural world, learn that it was once a human being with a story. The story follows, and unexpectedly deepens the observer's perspective on nature, suffusing it with a complex of human meanings that were formerly opaque to the observer's gaze. So Ceyx, calling Peleus's attention to the hawk's savage behaviour, explains that it was once his brother. Nature may appear simply natural, but in fact, Ovid tells us, it is largely human in origin, and aetiological narrative reveals how it has absorbed human qualities'.
- 4 Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 1, 452–567 (Daphne); 1, 689–747 (Syrinx); 6, 412–674; 1, 568–746 (Io); 2, 401–530 (Callisto); 5, 409–437 (Cyane); note also the language of penetration when Pluto later splits the ground to escape to the underworld, cf. Curran, "Rape" 222; systematically in Barkan L., *The Gods Made Flesh. Metamorphosis and the Pursuit of Paganism* (New Haven – London: 1986) 27–36.
- 5 Cf. e.g. Coulson F.T., "Metamorphoses in the School Tradition of France", in Clark J.G. – Coulson F.T. – McKinley K. (eds.), *Ovid in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: 2011) 48–82. Still indispensable is Barkan, *The Gods* 94–136.

aetiological metamorphoses in his *Filocolo*, having the young Idalgo, madly in love, turn into a tree at the gods' mercy,<sup>6</sup> and especially in the *Ninfale Fiesolano*, where the main protagonist is transformed at Diana's behest (as a punishment for breaking the vow of chastity), not just into a random object of the natural world, but into the spring of the Mensola, a tributary of the Arno originating near Fiesole, thereby assigning meaning to a topographic landmark of Boccaccio's own day.<sup>7</sup>

Of course, we also have aetiologies of this type in the *Aeneid* and various other canonical texts from the classical age,<sup>8</sup> not to speak of Ovid's and his peers' Hellenistic models.<sup>9</sup> But if a prominent first-generation humanist adopted – even in his vernacular works – the Ovidian (or largely Ovidian)

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- 6 Boccaccio Giovanni, *Filocolo*, ed. A.E. Quaglio, in Boccaccio Giovanni, *Tutte le opere* ed. V. Branca, vol. 1 (Milan: 1967) 47–675, here 5, 8: 'Il quale io volendo, come Dido fece o Biblide, in me recare, e già levato in piè di questo prato, ov'io piangendo sedeva, mi sentii non potermi avanti mutare, anzi soprastare a me Venere, di me pietosa, vidi, e desiderante di dare alle mie pene sosta. I piedi, già stati presti, in radici, e 'l corpo in pedale, e le braccia in rami, e i capelli in frondi di questo albero trasmutò, con dura corteccia cignendomi tutto quanto. Né variò la condizione d'esso dalla mia natura, se ben si riguarda: egli verso le stelle più che altro vicino albero la sua cima distende, così come io già tutto all'alte cose inteso mi di stendea'. Cf. Gittes T.F., *Boccaccio's Naked Muse: Eros, Culture and the Mythopoeic Imagination* (Toronto: 2008) 127–132.
- 7 Boccaccio Giovanni, *Ninfale Fiesolano*, ed. P.M. Forni (Milan: 1991) 7, 11–13, cf. Leuker T., "Boccaccios 'Ninfale Fiesolano': Zur Sinnfälligkeit und ideologischen Tendenz einer poetischen Aitiologie", *Romanische Forschungen* 117, 1 (2005) 59–71. See also the chapter on Boccaccio's *Commedia delle Ninfe Fiorentine* by Tobias Leuker and Anita Traninger's discussion of the *Ninfale Fiesolano* in this volume. Mythography was also employed as a strategy for conferring meaning onto local or regional landmarks in Boccaccio's Latin works, see Peters C., "Die Topographie eines Mythos. Der Sturz des Phaëthon in Boccaccios *Genealogie*", in Enenkel K.A.E. – Leuker T. – Pieper C., *Iohannes de Certaldo. Beiträge zu Boccaccios lateinischen Werken und ihrer Wirkung*, *Noctes Neolatinae* 24 (Hildesheim – Zurich – New York: 2015) 143–168.
- 8 Another important model for mythological inventions or forgeries that poetically enhance the author's own or his patron's surroundings is, of course, Statius, *Silvae* 2, 3, in which the poet invents an aetiology for a tree in the garden of his patron Atedius Melior. Cf. Strozzi Tito, *Borsias*, ed. W. Ludwig, *Humanistische Bibliothek* 11 5 (Munich: 1977) 306, where Ludwig emphasises that the quite recent discovery of the text (in 1416) must have made it especially attractive for humanists to imitate.
- 9 Probably the best comprehensive overview of Ovid's engagement in the aetiological tradition is Loehr J., *Ovids Mehrfacherklärungen in der Tradition aitiologischen Dichtens*, *Beiträge zur Altertumskunde* 74 (Stuttgart – Leipzig: 1996) 87–160, see esp. Loehr's thoughts on elegiac aetiology as one principal form of Roman poetry's generation of identity, *ibidem* 158–159.

pattern of a nymph's metamorphosis that results in a natural phenomenon and, subsequently, also a piece of mythological knowledge or mythographic antiquarianism, what would Quattrocento humanist Latin poetry make out of it?<sup>10</sup> After all, retelling or supplementing the great mythological master narratives of antiquity was a foremost concern of poets like Maffeo Vegio, half of whose seminal short epics (the *Asytanax* and the *Vellus aureum*) retell mythological subjects.<sup>11</sup> At the same time, poets of the fifteenth century did not shy away from relocating the personnel of ancient myth into new, contemporary settings – a practice countless Neo-Latin epics about contemporary history bear much witness to,<sup>12</sup> as does an increased liberty to put the ancient *numina* into unfavourable, parodist contexts.<sup>13</sup> How prone might this generation of poets have been to adopt the already established practice of mythopoeia, the creation of their own myths, and sew it onto the great literary and mythographic fabric of classical legacy?<sup>14</sup> In order to investigate this, I will present five texts by two authors, all originating from the second half of the fifteenth century, all of which coined new aetiologies for local phenomena and, to this end, also invented new nymphs belonging to these respective places.

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- 10 Tellingly, the extensive article by Kramer A., "Nymphen" in *Der Neue Pauly. Supplemente*, vol. 1, 5, *Die antike Mythologie in Literatur, Musik und Kunst von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart* (Stuttgart: 2008) 474–484, here 478, makes a leap from Boccaccio to the famous forgery of a Roman inscription from the early 1460s, attributed to Giannantonio Campano.
  - 11 Vegio Maffeo, *Short Epics*, ed. and trans. M.C.J. Putnam, I Tatti Renaissance Library 15 (Cambridge, MA – London: 2004).
  - 12 Peters C., *Mythologie und Politik. Die panegyrische Funktionalisierung der paganen Götter im lateinischen Epos des 15. Jahrhunderts*, Wissenschaftliche Schriften der wwU Münster x 24 (Münster: 2016); Hofmann H., "Von Africa über Bethlehem nach America: Das Epos in der neulateinischen Literatur", in Rüpe J. (ed.), *Von Göttern und Menschen erzählen. Formkonstanzen und Funktionswandel vormoderner Epik* (Stuttgart: 2001) 130–182.
  - 13 This is the case when, e.g., Antonio Beccadelli has his muse run off, leaving the poet alone with a peasant taking a dump in his *locus amoenus*. Cf. Beccadelli Antonio, *The Hermaphrodite*, ed. and trans. H. Parker, I Tatti Renaissance Library 42 (Cambridge, MA – London: 2010) 1, 40. On humanist propensity for the obscene, see Enenkel K.A.E., "Neo-Latin Erotic and Pornographic Literature (c. 1400–c. 1700)" in Ford P. – Bloemendal J. – Fantazzi C. (eds.), *Brill's Encyclopaedia of the Neo-Latin World*, 2 vols., RSA Texts and Studies 3 (Leiden – Boston: 2013) vol. 1, 487–501, here 490–496.
  - 14 Peters, "Die Topographie" 158–164.

### Muddy Waters: Tito Vespasiano Strozzi's *Lucilla Nympha Rechanensis*

The first two poems of our analysis were written by one of the most prolific and respected humanist poets of the fifteenth century, the Ferrarese court humanist and bureaucrat Tito Vespasiano Strozzi.<sup>15</sup> Remote relatives of the Florentine Strozzi, the Ferrarese branch of the family had been residents of the Emilia since the times of Tito's grandfather, who had been expelled from Florence. Both grandfather and father were successful in building a career in the civil and military administration of the Este court – back then the Este were still *marchesi*, the first duke from their dynasty being Borso d'Este from 1451 on.<sup>16</sup> Born in 1425 and orphaned early in life (1427), Tito and his older sisters and brothers grew up in the household of his uncle Paolo Costabili, who also happened to be the host of Guarino Veronese from 1429 on.<sup>17</sup> Early contact with and a thorough education by one of the indisputably most able and influential humanist teachers of his time was seminal, especially in Tito's inclination toward humanist literature. All of the male Strozzi children made their careers under the Este, and most were richly rewarded by the ruling family for their loyalty, but only Tito left notable poetic traces. His chief work is the unfinished *Borsias*, an epic originally for and about Duke Borso d'Este but also covering the lifespan of his successor, Ercole, and the mythical origins of the Este family. The poem comprised ten books when Strozzi died in 1505.<sup>18</sup> We will come back to this poem below. In addition to the *Borsias*, Tito Strozzi also collected a multitude of elegies in his *Eroticon liber*, showed his skill in lyrical poetry in the *Aeolosticha*, and composed epitaphs for, among others, Leonello and Borso d'Este.<sup>19</sup>

Among his earliest works, probably stemming from 1443, is a short epicizing text to which I now turn.<sup>20</sup> One of the first instalments of Tito's poetic

15 Still indispensable for Strozzi's biography is Ludwig's "Einleitung", in Strozzi, *Borsias* 11–58.

16 Fabbri L., "Da Firenze a Ferrara. Gli Strozzi tra Casa d'Este e antichi legami di sangue", in Berozzi M. (ed.), *Alla corte degli Estensi 1391–1991. Filosofia, arte e cultura a Ferra nei secoli 15 e 16. Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi, Ferrara, 5–7 marzo 1992* (Ferrara: 1994) 91–108; Gundersheimer W., *Ferrara. The Style of a Renaissance Despotism* (Princeton: 1973) 82–120.

17 Ludwig, "Einleitung" 11–13.

18 Ibidem.

19 Ibidem 18–28.

20 The most recent edition is in Strozzi Tito, *Poesie latine tratte dall' Aldina e confrontate coi codici*, ed. A. della Guardia (Modena: 1916).



oeuvre – written and offered to Leonello while he was still a student of Guarino's – to reach the public was, next to a collection of early elegies, the *Lucilla nympha rechanensis*, an aetiological poem in the fashion of what scholars used to call an "epyllion".<sup>21</sup> Its 289 hexameters tell the story of a nymph, a Naiad to be precise, living in the area around Ferrara, in what is modern Racano and Polesella. As it is a largely unknown poem, combining, despite its brevity, many motives and narrative set pieces derived from Ovid's nymphs, and as it is also a very alluring story, I would like to summarise it in more detail. We are given a rough overview by the *argumentum*, which is already present in the manuscript tradition. The eponymous protagonist of the poem, the nymph Lucilla, is a daughter of the river god Eridanus (which is the Po's Greek and alternative Latin name – note, however, that Ovid in some myths of the *Metamorphoses* rejects a synonymy of the two).<sup>22</sup> The gods Pan, Mercury, and Apollo, successively, court her. After rejecting all three divine suitors, she is caught sleeping and therefore unawares by a common shepherd, who violates her. Unable to bear her disgrace, she dies from hunger, thirst, and grief. Her father, Eridanus, turns her into a small creek of clear water; Apollo, insulted by her rejection, transforms the creek into a swamp. Now, for a more detailed summary of the actual poem, let us start with Strozzi's proemial address to his audience. The first sixteen verses of the poem assign it a scope that is at first antiquarian and mythographic, opening with *quaeritis* and anticipating the audience's question of whether the yet unnamed place of which the poet speaks owes its name and origin to natural causes or to a divine being.

Quaeritis hic sacri cum nomina fontis haberet  
 Ante locus, nitidusque foret fons, numquid ab ipsa  
 Manarit tellure, deum vel numine magno  
 Hic aliquis gelidas habitavit versus in undas.<sup>23</sup>

21 Tilg S., "On the Origins of the Modern Term 'Epyllion': Some Revisions to a Chapter in the History of Classical Scholarship", in Baumbach M. – Bär S. (eds.), *Brill's Companion to Greek and Latin Epyllion and its Reception* (Leiden – Boston: 2012) 29–54, here 30–37.

22 Note how Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 11, 258, has the 'Padus' run dry as a consequence of the Phaethontic conflagration; in 11, 324, however, his catastrophic ride across the sky finds an end in the 'Eridanus'.

23 Strozzi, *Lucilla* 1–4 ('Since this place had the name of a sacred spring before and the spring was clear, you ask whether it gushed forth from the ground itself, or if a god of great power, turned to water, lived here.'). Cf. e.g. the opening of the speech by Janus, Ovid's first interlocutor in the *Fasti* 1, 115: 'accipe quaesitae quae causa sit altera formae, / hanc simul ut noris officiumque meum'. ('Hear, what the other reason for the shape you asked about is, so, knowing that, you will also know what my duty is.').

The ensuing verses (5–13) enhance this perspective by giving it a didactic edge as well: Morally speaking, the youthful listeners (girls) shall learn not to rely too much on their beauty, because time will not allow it to last. The first 13 verses might be a later addition, since in verse 14 the poet begins again with the announcement that he will tell of a two-step metamorphosis, of a girl turned to water and the spring's subsequent transformation into a swamp.<sup>24</sup> The following invocation (16–24) is not directed to the muses but to Leonello, the *marchese* of Ferrara, as a potential future patron and employer, who had already been the dedicatee of the first instalment of elegies Strozzi had published.<sup>25</sup>

As his first expedition on epic terrain, the proem of the *Lucilla* serves simultaneously as a topical announcement and *recusatio* of a follow-up project, an epic poem that will tell of the *genus Estense et magnorum ingentia facta*, 'the Este kin and great deeds of great men'. The prospective *opus magnum* Strozzi announces is what will later become the *Borsias*.<sup>26</sup> After twenty-four proem verses, the actual aetiological account starts. Among the tree-nymphs of the region around Pelosella, modern Polesella, there also lived a Naiad called Lucilla, a daughter of the river Eridanus, who was named for her shining beauty and was famous for her swiftness. Strozzi gives his reader enough details of the setting of his myth to identify where Lucilla and her Hamadryad friends live. By stating that she is a 'nympha Rechanensis' and that she lived in the 'rura Pelosellae', where the Po takes in the waves of the green 'fossa', he points to the junction of the river Po with the so-called 'Fossa Polesella', a canal that from the late Middle Ages until 1957 (six years after a final, devastating flood) connected the Po with the Canal Bianco, and thus with the Adige.<sup>27</sup> The junction is located between the settlements of Polesella and Raccano, where the Strozzi had a family estate (and where Tito Strozzi would ultimately die).<sup>28</sup>

The nymph is characterised as Diana's favourite; the two could easily be confused in terms of beauty and skill, were it not for their different types of hair – Diana wears hers straight, Lucilla has curls (25–41). Such beauty does

24 Strozzi, *Lucilla* 13–15.

25 Strozzi circulated two editions in 1443, both of which he dedicated to Leonello, see Ludwig, "Einleitung" 15–20.

26 As early as 1460, a first mention of the *Borsias* as work in progress bears witness to the beginning of Strozzi's endeavour, see Ludwig, "Einleitung" 36–37.

27 Patitucci Uggeri S., *Carta Archeologica Medievale del Territorio Ferrarese*, vol. 2, *Le Vie d'Acque in Rapporto al Nodo Idroviario di Ferrara*, Quaderni di Archeologia Medievale 5, 2 (Sesto Fiorentino: 2002) 41.

28 Ludwig, "Einleitung" 16.

not remain unnoticed; therefore, Lucilla is courted by satyrs, who try to win her favour with promises and gifts of all kinds, mostly hunting gear (42–49). The nymph, however, rejects them all; like the north wind, she is unyielding, although she does enjoy the admiration of the Arcadian population, much like the peacock enjoys it when his feathers are praised (50–55). The poem then moves on from the satyrs' anonymous courting to a tricolon of divine suitors. The first one is Pan; he addresses her as the daughter of Eridanus, whose course he tracks in a learned paraphrase. He then advertises himself as the ruler of Arcadia who gives in only to his love and desire for Lucilla and announces that he will sing songs of praise for Lucilla on his flute, making her queen of the nymphs (56–78). But his beloved only mocks her suitor and laughs at his offer (79–83). Next in the queue of suitors is Mercury, who appears in the shape of a herdsman. His speech is the shortest of the three gods addressing Lucilla, and what is more, it is only paraphrased, or rather even summarised by the author in indirect speech (84–91). Lucilla, more of a teaser, at first acts as if she was falling for Mercury's courting, only to then suddenly pull back and flee – she achieves the almost impossible and outruns the Olympian messenger, thereby proving her unparalleled swiftness the poet had acclaimed earlier. The god's attempt to put her to sleep with his 'caduceus' comes to nothing (92–110). After her escape, she finds rest in a wood. She has hardly recovered when she is spotted by the third of her divine suitors, Phoebus Apollo. The laurel-crowned god approaches and addresses Lucilla: he, too, indulges in extended self-advertisement and boasts of being the sun god and the patron of song, but must admit that his powers meet their match in the forces of love. Ironically, he as the patron of medicine and father of Asclepius knows no cure for love, and the arrow of Cupid fells him – the best of all archers. He closes on the promise of apotheosis and catasterism for Lucilla (111–158). Unlike with the previous attempts by Pan and Mercury, Lucilla is intrigued by the god's promises, his eloquence, and his good looks. Still, she must consider the vow of chastity she gave as a disciple of Diana; *amor* and *pudor* are struggling with each other. In this state of unresolve, she lets down her defence and Apollo, by use of the most minor force, has his way with her (159–174).

The couple, however, is interrupted by the sudden appearance of Diana and her fellowship. Apollo flees immediately in order to avoid his sister's revenge for violating one of her disciples. Confronted by the goddess, Lucilla conceals what happened and instead goes back to her business, telling the goddess of her findings concerning the best hunting grounds nearby (175–186). Here, the poet intervenes and addresses his protagonist directly: Lucilla would have been wise to enjoy the pleasures of youth and to give in to Apollo, as her fate will be sealed all too soon (187–199). The poem then returns to telling the myth:

shortly afterwards, in the midday heat, Diana and her nymphs seek shelter in the woods, while Lucilla wanders off from the group and falls asleep in a grove. A herdsman named Admetus, looking for a stray calf, stumbles upon Lucilla; mistaking her for Diana he instantly teems with desire for her and, catching the nymph off guard, violates her (200–233). Lucilla cries out for help, struggles to free herself, and runs off in dismay; shame keeps her from returning to her fellow huntresses. Upon reaching the banks of the Eridanus, her father's domain, she begs him for mercy. Lucilla refuses to live in disgrace, violated by a lowborn shepherd. The damage to her renown worries her the most – never would she let herself be called 'amica pastoris', the lover of a shepherd. Thus, she lies down on the ground and refuses to get back up, and by a mixture of hunger, thirst, and grief ceases to be, dissolving like ice in the sunshine. Father Eridanus commands her remains, together with his own tears, to become a clear spring (234–268).

Apollo feels offended by this: the god will not bear that a common shepherd got what he, Apollo, was ultimately denied, and he taints Lucilla's beauty even after the metamorphosis. The clear creek turns into a muddy swamp, teeming with frogs and vermin of all sorts (269–283). The poem ends with the inscription of the epitaph the nymphs of Raccano and Polesella are said to have erected for their deceased companion. It states that had she not been taken by a cruel fate, she could have been the one to succeed Diana (284–289).

Now, it will not have gone unnoticed by any reader with even a slight knowledge of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* that Strozzi's poem is packed with allusions to and imitations of a multitude of nymph-related myths in Ovid's epic. To summarise only the most significant of them: first, there is intensive use made of the story of Pan and Syrinx.<sup>29</sup> It starts with Diana and her follower Lucilla being virtual lookalikes save for one detail. While in the myth of Syrinx, the only difference between her and Diana is the material their bows are made of, Diana and Lucilla can only be distinguished from each other by their hair.<sup>30</sup> The tension between Pan's former behaviour and his advances towards Lucilla

29 Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 1, 689–712.

30 Strozzi, *Lucilla* 38–41: 'Laudabant mores formamque artemque magistram, / Saepius utra foret dubitantes Cynthia nymphae, / Ni dea fudisset planos per colla capillos, / Crispas illa comas aptum religasset in orbem'. ('The nymphs praised character, beauty and her mastery of skill, and would often have wondered which of the two was the Cynthia goddess, if the goddess had not her plain hair flowing over her shoulders, while she herself was wearing her curls in a knot'). Cf. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 1, 695–697: 'ritu quoque cincta Dianae / falleret et posset credi Latonia, si non / corneus huic arcus, si non foret aureus illi'.

is augmented by references in or around his speech, both explicitly – he approaches Lucilla ‘Syringae oblitus amores’, ‘forgetful of his love for Syrinx’ – and implicitly – he points to the flute hanging around his neck that is made from the reed Syrinx was turned into.<sup>31</sup> The latter should be considered a deterrent rather than an enticement for the nymph, as it is a reminder of how Pan once forced himself on another nymph.

The second suitor, Mercury, encounters Lucilla while herding goats – in the *Metamorphoses*, he approaches Argus, the guardian assigned to Io by Juno, disguised as a shepherd, and then lures him to sleep with the story of Pan and Syrinx.<sup>32</sup> Mercury’s speech to Lucilla in Strozzi’s poem is paraphrased, or rather summarised in indirect speech by the poet, which points to one of the most peculiar features of Ovid’s account of Pan and Syrinx: when Argus falls asleep, the poet takes over as narrator and finishes the untold story in indirect speech.<sup>33</sup>

When the poem proceeds to Apollo’s courting, the chief model for the account is in line with what we would expect: Ovid’s version of Apollo and Daphne. Like Pan’s flute before, the laurel wreath Apollo is wearing betrays his former misconduct.<sup>34</sup> He admits, as he does in Ovid’s account after being

31 Strozzi, *Lucilla* 72–73: ‘Aspice quam collo mihi fistula pendeat apte: / Haec tua si sapiens erit et iungemus amores.’ (‘Behold how neatly the flute is hanging from my neck: If you are wise enough, it shall be yours and we will unite in love.’). Pan’s *amores* may even be read metapoetically as ‘love stories’, which would make his announcement – to make Lucilla into another one of the trophies on his necklace – even more disturbing for the nymph. On seriality in the myth of Pan and Syrinx, see also Curran, “Rape” 217, who describes Syrinx as ‘a seasoned veteran, who seems to have made a career out of evading rapists’.

32 Ovid, *Metamorphoses* I, 668–721.

33 Strozzi, *Lucilla* 84–91: ‘Viderat hanc iaculis capreas Iove natus agentem, / Exarsitque simul; positis talaribus ergo / Siderei tegmen capitis virgamque potentem / Sumit et unde sibi genus esset, quisve deorum, / Quae sit causa viae, quae magna potentia docti / Pectoris enarrans, multa prece sedulus instat, / Magnaque promittit concessi praemia amoris, / Et testem dictis Stygiam iubet esse paludem.’ (‘Jupiter’s son had spotted her driving stags with a spear and immediately was aflame with love; he lays off his winged shoes, picks up his star-sprinkled hat and his mighty stick and tells her whose son he is, what rank he has among the gods, what the reason for his journey is and how skilled and powerful of heart he is, insists relentlessly with pleas, promises great rewards, once she consented to his love, calling to the Stygian waters as his witness.’). Cf. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* I, 700: ‘[...] talia verba refert – restabat verba referre [...]’; the oath Jupiter swears to the Styx shortly afterward to convince Juno that the suffering of Io must end (1,737) is the source for Strozzi’s verse 91.

34 Strozzi, *Lucilla* 118–119: ‘[...] Atque decus proprium quaesitis artibus auxit, / Cinctus flaventes lauro viridante capillos.’ (‘[...] and he enhanced his overall splendour with refined skill, crowned with green laurel on his blond hair.’). Cf. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* I, 564–565.

hit by Cupid's dart, that his power as patron of medicine and archery comes to nothing against the power of love, although in Strozzi's account he does so with a shift in order and emphasis.<sup>35</sup> Strozzi now contrasts himself with Ovid by making Apollo initially successful. But then, by showing Apollo as indignant and insisting on having the last word, the narrative structure of Strozzi's model is re-established. Ovid's Apollo makes it very clear that even now, as a laurel tree, Daphne will not escape him. Strozzi's Apollo pollutes the water of the new creek to underline that a nymph who offers herself to a vile shepherd, the likes of which Apollo boasted he was not back in the *Metamorphoses*,<sup>36</sup> would not have been good enough for him in the first place.<sup>37</sup> The catasterism Apollo promises to Lucilla recalls the myth of Callisto, who is turned into a bear by a vengeful Juno and subsequently set among the stars, together with Callisto's son at the hands of Jupiter.<sup>38</sup>

35 Strozzi, *Lucilla* 138–144: 'Ipse salutiferas aegris mortalibus artes / Inveni; sed nulla mihi medicamina prosunt: / Quin etiam, noster cum sit certissimus arcus, / Certior est unus nostro tamen acer acutis / Qui mihi securo fixit praecordia telis, / Atque ut siderea supplex de sede venire / Compulit'. ('I myself have invented techniques which bring healing to sick mortals; but none of my potions can help me: Worse even, although my bow is the most precise of all, there is only one strong enough to pierce through my unsuspecting chest with sharp arrows and force me to descend from the heavens.'). Cf. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 1, 519–525: 'certa quidem nostra est, / nostra tamen una sagitta / certior, in vacuo quae vulnera pectore fecit! / inventum medicina meum est, opiferque per orbem / dicor, et herbarum subiecta potentia nobis. / ei mihi, quod nullis amor est sanabilis herbis / nec prosunt domino, quae prosunt omnibus, artes!'

36 Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 1, 512–514: 'non incola montis, / non ego sum pastor, non hic armenta gregesque / horridus observo'.

37 Strozzi, *Lucilla* 271–283: 'Perdidit infelix solitum mutata nitorem / Lympha, gravis magni quod fecit Apollinis ira. / Namque, memor quantum cupido sibi dura fuisset, / Naias adventu subito intercepta Dianae, / Despectos quoniam penitus siccare liquores / Non potuit, radiis venas atque humida fervens, / Spiramenta suis contracta vaporibus urit, / Ne pater auxilio furtim submisceat undas, / Et miseratus alat labens tellure sub ima, / Semine tum vario foedis animalia formis / Ardore assiduo vicium capientibus undis / Protulit, amissa specie fons lucidus olim. / Et deus ipse sui sic extitit ultor amoris'. ('The unlucky water was exchanged and lost its former splendour; this was caused by the fierce anger of great Apollo. For he remembers how cruel his desire had been and how the Naiad was taken from him by the sudden appearance of Diana and since he is unable to make the waters utterly run dry, he heats the water veins with his rays and lessens the flow of water by evaporation, so the father may not come to her assistance with his stream and nourish her from below the ground. Then the once clear spring has lost its form and brings forth a multitude of grossly shaped animals from the waves that deteriorate in the continuous heat. Thus the god himself became the avenger of his love.').

38 Strozzi, *Lucilla* 148–152; cf. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 1, 494–530.

There, like in the tainting of the new spring, we also have the idea of a gradual metamorphosis, resulting from an escalation of sentiments between certain Olympians. Amphibians inhabiting the tainted canal may be considered an allusion not only to the fact that there is a substantial number of frogs in the Po Delta, but also to the myth of the Lycian peasants who refused to let Latona and her newborns drink from their pond, and who even stirred the mud on the ground to make the water undrinkable.<sup>39</sup> In that instance, tainting the water is the crime, for which the peasants are turned into frogs. In Strozzi's poem, making clear water swampy is an additional stage of metamorphic punishment by a god feeling wronged. The epitaph, finally, whose citation ends the poem, is reminiscent of the epitaph the nymphs of the Eridanus erect for Phaethon in the *Metamorphoses* – a passage in which Ovid ostensibly deals with questions of how and where to locate mythological antiquities, as I have shown elsewhere.<sup>40</sup>

Nearly all of these conscious imitations of Ovidian models, which could be corroborated and illustrated with even more evidence on a micro-philological scale, have to do with nymphs being raped and/or gods feeling wronged. The topic of sexualised violence notwithstanding, the poet employs a lot of comic relief in his poem. Mark, for example, how Mercury fails in all his core skills – that is, speed, rhetoric, and the ability to lull people to sleep – and Apollo, before his romantic encounter, puts on his telltale laurel for purely cosmetic reasons. The young Tito Strozzi condenses a maximum of related motives from his Augustan predecessor to demonstrate his mastery of inventing *causae* and arranging *casus*. At the same time, he ironically overextends his own *aemulatio*: in this respect, the perpetrator of the crime, set against the mythological models, is telling – Lucilla is so exhausted by fulfilling her accumulated

39 Cf. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* VI, 361–381. A fellow humanist poet, Basinio da Parma, even has his and Strozzi's former teacher Guarino Veronese turn into a frog on the banks of the Po in an episode obviously imitating Ovid's account of the Lycian peasants in his epic *Hesperis*, see Peters, "Die Topographie" 158–159.

40 Strozzi, *Lucilla* 287–289: 'Hunc in honorem suae tumulum statuere sororis / Concordes nymphe, quam nisi fera fata tulissent / Formosae potuit succedere sola Dianae.' ('The nymphs have unanimously erected this tombstone in honour of their sister, who, had not a cruel fate taken her, would have been the only one to succeed beautiful Diana.') As opposed to Ovid, *Metamorphoses* II, 326–327: 'hic situs est phaethon currus auriga paterni / quem si non tenuit magnis tamen excidit ausis'. Note especially the conditional clause in the second half. See Peters, "Die Topographie" 150–156.

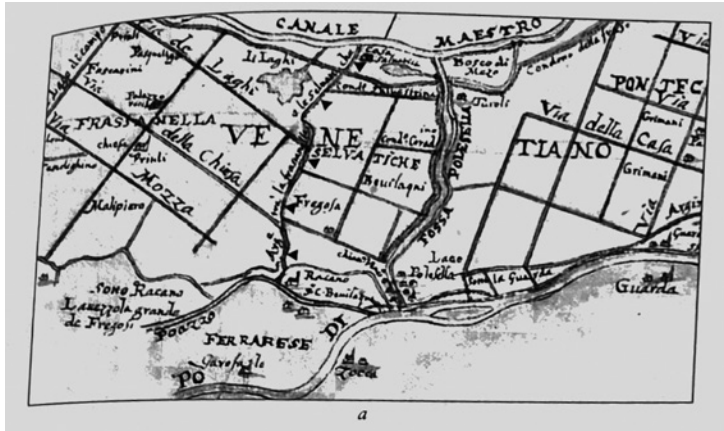


FIGURE 14.1 *Manuscript map (17th century) of the waterways (Fossa Polesella and others) on the border between Ferrarese and Venetian territory, in Patitucci Uggeri S., Carta Archeologica Medievale del Territorio Ferrarese, vol. 2: Le Vie d'Acque in Rapporto al Nodo Idroviario di Ferrara, Quaderni di Archeologia Medievale 5, 2 (Sesto Fiorentino: 2002) 41.*

mythographic duties that, when resting from them, literally the first person who comes along can violate her.<sup>41</sup>

Simultaneously, Strozzi offers a very poetic aetiology for a very mundane landmark. Lucilla is obviously the Fossa Polesella, or *Policella* – the Latin name that was common in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries [Fig. 14.1].<sup>42</sup> As an artificial structure, the canal has no natural current, thus obviously having an inclination toward murky water and huge amounts of mud, contradicting the name of the former *numen* Lucilla.<sup>43</sup> The fact that it was a man-made piece of infrastructure and that it presumably had never been clear are both playfully camouflaged by Strozzi's tragic aetiological tale of a nymph being raped by a peasant and refused a worthy final resting place by a jealous god. That taming the Po by means of hydraulic engineering was an important item on the Estes' agenda in matters of civil administration suggests that the poem is

41 Significantly enough, the shepherd goes by the Latin version of the name Boccaccio gave the boorish protagonist of his *Commedia delle Ninfe Fiorentine*. Again, see Tobias Leuker's essay in this volume.

42 Patitucci Uggeri, *Carta* 41.

43 On aetiological wordplay in Ovid, see Tissol, *The Face* 168–171.



a playful nod to the *marchese's* direction.<sup>44</sup> The dutiful adoption of dozens of related motives and elements from the *Metamorphoses* may result from the work's being a sort of "progymnasma". Still, Strozzi can show Leonello d'Este, the dedicatee, how able he is at concocting antiquities and situating them on his home turf, so to speak, thereby insinuating what he can do for Leonello and the *genus Estense* once he ventures beyond his self-imposed *recusatio*.

### Songs from the Wood: Poets, Nymphs, and Herons in Tito Strozzi's *Borsias*

These creative frictions with the Ovidian model are also palpable in other newly coined aetiological myths by humanists. We will take a more summary glance at two of them. The first is another work of Strozzi's, albeit a much later one. In his *Borsias* – the actual epic that the poet of the *Lucilla nymphe Rechanensis* both announces and topically shies away from writing – Strozzi inserts an aetiological myth into the greater narrative framework. Towards the end of book five, representing a state of completion that the epic had reached between the mid-1480s and mid-1490s,<sup>45</sup> the *Borsias* narrative has, as a follow-up to visits from Pope Pius II and Emperor Frederick III, a third high-ranking guest come to Ferrara: Giovanni Pontano, whom Strozzi had befriended earlier and encountered several times in official contexts, not least during the Salt War of Ferrara in the 1480s,<sup>46</sup> and who – more important for our topic – by means of poetry had built for himself a reputation for encounters with nymphs in the Po Delta. I am referring, of course, to Pontano's elegiac *Eridanus*, which stages an encounter between the poet and his future lover Stella in the shape of a nymph on the banks of the eponymous river.<sup>47</sup>

Aetiologies – rather tongue-in-cheek – occur here as well, for example, the river god's attempt to extinguish the elegiac lover's blaze of love with one of the Po's notorious floods.<sup>48</sup> These were actually an important matter of state

44 On the Este administration and its engagement in building dams and preventing floods, see Gundersheimer, *Ferrara* 63–65.

45 See Ludwig's commentary on the *Borsias* 288–289.

46 Cazzola F., "Venezia, Ferrara e il controllo del Po: dalla guerra del sale alla battaglia di Polesella", *Archivio Veneto* 141 (2010) 241–254, here 244–251.

47 Pontano Giovanni, *Eridanus*, ed. and trans. L. Roman, I Tatti Renaissance Library 63 (Cambridge, MA – London: 2014) x–xii.

48 Pontano, *Eridanus* I, 4, 1–6: 'Pastores, cohibete gregem, procul ite, capellae, / Ite citae: en flammās pectora nostra vomunt, / Flagrat ager, suspensa volant incendia ventis, / Ipse et Amor flammās ventilat, ipsa Venus. / Affer opem, Eridane, fluviosque immitte citatos; / Si

for the Estes' civil administration, as we just saw. Strozzi even stages an encounter between Pontano and two nymphs, albeit an epistemic, not an erotic one: Strolling through the marshlands on his way to the Strozzi family estate Quartesana – in fact a gift from Borso to Tito<sup>49</sup> – in an area that the poem says had once been the sacred grove of a nymph named Cedrea (to this day still called Codrea), the foreign poet is drawn to a place where the locals are said to have spotted divine creatures more than once.<sup>50</sup> As soon as Pontano enters the grove, he sees two nymphs: Glaucia, a Naiad, and Lysis, a Dryad, singing beautiful songs while combing and adorning each other's hair.<sup>51</sup> Pontano advances with all due caution and respect; conscious of the hazards of approaching a nymph unawares, he addresses them: he intended no harm, Pontano emphasises, and did not want to cause a disturbance. He, the renowned poet Pontano, envoy of King Ferdinand of Naples, had ventured into their domain because of its fame as a sacred and mythical spot.<sup>52</sup> The nymphs give him a warm welcome: Pontano's fame had also left its mark in the groves and swamps of the Po Delta, Lysis states, and since both men and gods are much indebted to his poetry, the nymphs were willing to share their knowledge of the place's mythological past with him.<sup>53</sup> Glaucia then takes the poet deeper into the woods, where she tells the story – roughly sixty verses long – of the eponymous nymph

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non, et fluvios haec mea flamma voret.' ('Shepherds, gather your flock; go far away, she-goats, / go quickly. See, my heart is spewing flames, / the field is blazing, flames fly high, lofted by winds, / and Love himself, Venus herself, fan flames. / Bring help, Eridanus, send your waters in a hurry; / if not, this flame will devour even your streams.' trans. L. Roman).

49 See Ludwig, 'Einleitung' 29–30; Strozzi refers to it in Strozzi *Borsias* v, 45–50, where he merges an imitation of the fictional temple Virgil 'builds' for Augustus at the beginning of *Georgics* 3 and his actual estate, see Peters, *Mythologie* 271–273.

50 Strozzi, *Borsias* v, 379–388.

51 Strozzi, *Borsias* v, 389–398: 'Hic umbrosa vagae volucres loca dulcibus implent / Questibus et virides luxu ingeniosa decenti / Pingit odoratis natura coloribus herbas. / Glaucia Naiadum Dryadumque pulcherrima Lysis / Assuetae luco rapidos hic saepius ambae / Lenibant aestus positae sub mollibus umbris. / Tum mistas vario textentes flore coronas / Et Philomeleis certantes cantibus ambae / Longa moraturae fallebant tempora lucis / Fessaque venatus reparabant membra labore.' ('Roaming birds fill the shadowy place with sweet lament and gentle nature paints the green grass with fragrant colours in decent luxury. Glaucia and Lysis, fairest of the Naiads and Dryads, respectively, and accustomed to this grove, often lay beneath the soft shadows to soothe the harsh heat. They wove colourful flowers into crowns and frittered away the lasting light of day, recovering from the toils of hunting').

52 Strozzi, *Borsias* v, 402–419.

53 Strozzi, *Borsias* v, 420–436.

Cedrea. There are obvious and striking similarities between the beginning of Glaucia's speech and the *exordium* of the *Lucilla*:

Forsan nemus hoc habitabile tectum  
Esse putas, Pontane, feris et honore carere  
Numinis: extat honos et habet sua numina lucus.  
Hunc formosa sibi tenuit Cedrea dicatum  
Et nunc saepe tenet veterem mutata figuram.<sup>54</sup>

In both texts, the audience has a supposed desire to know whether a place they know or currently see is inhabited by divine beings. On the one hand, this hearkens back to aetiological dialogues, especially those of Ovid's *Fasti*. To an even greater degree, however, it directs the reader's attention to the poet's self-confident endeavour to create new myths and aetiologies from scratch. The playful claim that mythographic knowledge is about to be revised ('forsan [...] putas'), as well as the idea that there is a continuity of mythological "population" in the surroundings of the humanists ('extat'), emphasises the fact that the audience is about to experience a feigned antiquity, a strategy for which the invention of a nymph is a viable shorthand.

Glaucia's story is as follows: a Dryad – daughter of the agricultural deity Phytaleas and the late Silvia – named Cedrea had joined the huntress disciples of Diana, whom she surpassed even in archery and hunting. Strozzi recycles some verses from the *Lucilla* here.<sup>55</sup> A son of the Eridanus named Sandalus, personifying the Sandalo, a now vanished branch of the Po di Volano,<sup>56</sup> fell madly in love with the nymph and one day forced himself upon her while she was bathing in his waters. She calls to Diana for help and the goddess redeems her by transforming her into a bird. Like Apollo and Pan, who are left only with the leaves of Daphne and Syrinx, respectively, all Sandalus gets to grasp of his beloved is a bunch of feathers.<sup>57</sup> The newly created bird in Strozzi's

54 Strozzi, *Borsias* v, 439–444 ('Perhaps you think, Pontano, that this grove is merely a home to beasts and lacking the honour of a divine inhabitant. Well, there is some of its former dignity left and it has its gods. This grove once belonged and was dedicated to the beautiful Cedrea, and up to this day she possesses it, albeit in a changed form.').

55 See Strozzi, *Borsias* v, 460–464 as opposed to Strozzi, *Lucilla* 31–34. To define a humanist's method as "recycling" is not necessarily a derogatory term; cf. Gwynne P. – Schirg B., "The 'Economics of Poetry'. Fast Production as a Crucial Skill in Neo-Latin Encomiastic Poetry", *Studi Rinascimentali* 13 (2015) 11–32.

56 Patitucci Uggeri, *Carta* 56–57.

57 Strozzi, *Borsias* v, 497–502: 'Namque / facta novis ales – dictu mirabile – pennis / evolat atque levem in manibus tibi, Sandale, plumam / pro membris – sic fama refert – ablata



FIGURE 14.2 *Squacco Heron* (*Ardeola ralloides*).

aetiology now inhabits the trees around ponds and pools of the region, stealing fish from their waters; the locals call the bird *Guacus* for the sound of its voice. The bird Strozzi hints at is not the species that in modern Italian is called “guacco”, which would be the little bittern (*Ixobrychus minutus*), nor is it the little egret (*Egretta garzetta*) Ludwig proposes,<sup>58</sup> but rather the *Ardeola ralloides* [Fig. 14.2]. The looks and behaviour of the little bittern – living solitarily or in small groups – and the naming of the little egret, Ludwig’s conjecture, which has never been called “guacco” and whose call would never justify such onomatopoeia, rule out either attribution. The *Ardeola ralloides*, on the other hand, not only matches the outward features and the behaviour Strozzi describes,<sup>59</sup>

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reliquit. / Ast illam indigenae mutato corpore Guacum / a vocis dixere sono.’ (‘For a newly created bird – a miraculous thing to tell – flies away on its wings and instead of its body leaves only some down in your hands, Sandalus. After the metamorphosis, however, the locals called this bird Guacus from the sound of its voice.’).

58 Strozzi, *Borsias* 305.

59 Strozzi, *Borsias* v, 502–508: ‘Nunc stagna lacusque / exiguos pisces rostro insectata pererrat. / Inde famem saturata redit solitosque recessus / incolit, utque vides, sedet illis plurima ramis / atque sui generis, quarum ingens suspicis agmen, / pulchrior alitibus veluti regina coronam / insignem ante alias sublimi in vertice gestat.’ (‘Now it strolls through ponds and small lakes, hunting fish with its beak. Thence, after satisfying its hunger, it

but to this day goes by the name of *Squacco heron*, ever since Aldrovandi registered it in the Po area by the local name *Squacco* some ninety years after Strozzi's death.<sup>60</sup>

Leaving Renaissance zoology aside, what is really striking about Strozzi's short aetiology, beyond all the Ovidian echoes one would find by looking at it more closely, is that his new bird plays absolutely no role in the scenery Pontano visits. Birds are heard before and after his visit, but in both cases it is the nightingale he hears, the bird Ovid has originating in the gruesome rape and mutilation of Philomela by Tereus.<sup>61</sup> Why not the "guacus"? It appears as though Strozzi, who on the one hand stresses the facticity of the metamorphosis's result by *ut vides* and *suspicias*,<sup>62</sup> is on the other hand deliberately "out-tweeting" and acoustically drowning out his own creation. He thereby subordinates his own mythographic and mythopoetic authority not only to the Ovidian model, but surely also to Pontano, who, thanks to his *Eridanus*, has a more substantial claim to the Po and its nymphs than does Strozzi.

### Nymphs to Neobiota: Jacopo Sannazaro's Latin Poems

We conclude our reading with another high-ranking Italian Neo-Latin poet: creative friction with the Ovidian model of nymphs and aetiology also occurs in the works of a student and close friend of Pontano's, Jacopo Sannazaro. Sannazaro treats aetiological subjects several times in his Latin works. The most prominent instances are the standalone short epic poem *Salices*, the Willows, and the fourth eclogue of the *Piscatoria*, dedicated to Ferdinand, Duke of Calabria, who was the son of Federico I, who had died in French exile. In the eclogue, Proteus presents a lengthy song about mythological antiquities in the Gulf of Naples, in which the islands of Ischia and Procida ('Aenaria' and 'Prochyta'), among other entities, are declared monuments of

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returns and lives in its usual hideaway, and, as you see, sits in those branches in great numbers of its own kind, as you can behold up there, and up on its vertex, like a queen it wears a crown, more prominent than that of the other birds.').

60 Aldrovandi *Ulissee*, *Ornithologia*, vol. 3 (Bologna, de Franciscis: 1603) 368.

61 Strozzi, *Borsias* v, 388–390 and Strozzi, *Borsias* v, 539–541: 'Ibi dulces exercet garrula cantus / Flebilibus Philomela modis noctesque diesque / Sandalidem ad ripam frondentibus abdita ramis.' ('There the garrulous nightingale sings its sweet song night and day with sad melodies, hidden in the branches on the bank of Sandalus.').

62 Note also Strozzi's suggestion in *Borsias* v, 471–474 that the site of the cult once established for Diana and her nymphs lives on in the parish church of San Paolo (still extant today).

the Gigantomachy, as well as the Phlegraean Fields.<sup>63</sup> Proteus also offers an alternative aetiology for the name of Posillipo Hill and the island of Nisida off the nearby coast by telling the story of a youth in love with the nymph Nesis, and his rash advances, which drive the victim into the sea, leaving the island and the promontory as a petrified reminder of her flight and her pursuer's last attempt at an embrace.<sup>64</sup> Sannazaro might at least have guessed the actual etymology of Posillipo, the speaking name *Pausilypum* (Παυσίλυπον, 'putting a stop to suffering') given to a Roman villa by its proprietor Vedius Pollio – from a related anecdote in Pliny.<sup>65</sup>

The *Salices*, Sannazaro's first Latin poem, on the other hand, fills a lacuna in Ovid's aetiologies of trees and plants and thereby embeds an epic and didactic subject in a bucolic setting: the short work (96 lines) tells of a bucolic feast to which a group of timid nymphs is – at first reluctantly – lured by satyrs, and which then quickly deteriorates into a gruesome scene of gang rape. Only by a metamorphosis into the eponymous *salices*, weeping willows in this case, can the nymphs evade the horror of being violated, with their longing for the rescuing waters of the Sarno, on whose banks they grow, forever preserved by the

63 Sannazaro Jacopo, *Latin Poetry*, ed. and trans. M.C.J. Putnam, I Tatti Renaissance Library 38 (Cambridge, MA – London: 2009), here *Salices* and *Piscatoria* 4. Of course, Proteus' song is modelled on Silen's song in Virgil's sixth *Eclogue*. For a detailed analysis of the landmarks and antiquities Sannazaro has Proteus explain mythologically, see Coppel B., "Der Golf von Neapel: Proteus' Nachtlied and der Punta della Campanella (*Ecl.* 4)", in Schäfer E. (ed.), *Sannazaro und die Augusteische Dichtung*, NeoLatina 10 (Tübingen: 2005) 87–100. The sixth *Eclogue* had already served Boccaccio as a source of inspiration for the lengthy song Glaucus sings in the eleventh poem of Boccaccio's *Bucolicum Carmen*, cf. Weiß P., "Metamorphosen eines Mythos. Boccaccios bukolisches Weltgedicht und die allegorische Ovidexegese (*Ekloge 11, Pantheon*), in Enenkel – Leuker – Pieper (eds.), *Iohannes de Certaldo* 119–141.

64 Sannazaro, *Piscatoria* 4, 46–56: 'Te quoque formosae captum Nesidos amore, / Pausilype, irato compellat ab aequore questu. / 'Ah miser, ah male caute, tuae quid fata puellae / acceleras? Cupit in medios evader fluctus / infelix, cupit insuetum finire dolorem. / [...] Ah miser, ah male caute, ultra quid bracchia tendis? / Siste gradum; riget illa iugis assueta nivosis / venatrix, quam mille ferae timuere sequentem / per saltus.' ('You also, Posillipo, enthralled by love for beautiful Nesis, he addresses with angry outcry from the sea: 'Ah, poor creature, ah, incautious soul, why do you hasten the death of your girl? In her misfortune she yearns to escape into the midst of the sea, she yearns to put an end to her novel grief. [...] Ah, poor creature, ah, incautious soul, why do you stretch forth your arms? Stay your step. She lies stiff, the huntress accustomed to snow-covered ridges, she whom a thousand wild beasts feared as she stalked them through the glades.' Trans. Putnam).

65 Pliny, *Natural History* 1X, 168.

willows' tilt towards the water.<sup>66</sup> The perpetuation of dismay and suffering by the features of a tree that results from the metamorphoses is clearly modelled on Ovid's account of the Heliades, whose mourning for their brother Phaethon is so severe and unrelenting that they are absorbed into trees, but keep crying resin that hardens into amber.<sup>67</sup> Moreover, the explanation Sannazaro gives for the nymphs' wariness is similar to the caution with which Strozzi's Lucilla encounters two of her three divine suitors: the nymphs in the *Salices* have too often heard the shocking stories of Daphne and Syrinx, whose only salvation from a god's sexual assault had been their metamorphosis into laurel and reed, respectively.<sup>68</sup>

The most telling example of Sannazaro's treatment of our issue, however, is his *Elegy* 11, 4, in that it combines all of the above: a supplementary aetiology adding to the canonical ones from antiquity, a comment on the mythographic tradition, and evasion from sexual violence as the reason for metamorphosis. The elegy offers an aetiology of the white mulberry tree. As in the poems by Strozzi presented above, in Sannazaro's elegy the poet also claims to reveal mythographic knowledge hitherto unknown.<sup>69</sup> The white mulberry was created, Sannazaro says, when the nymph Morinna was fleeing a blizzard in the hills around Pozzuoli and sought shelter in a cave.<sup>70</sup> There she encountered Faunus, herding goats, who harassed her with very suggestive comments and pursued her out into the open. Morinna, desperate to escape, was subsequently turned into a tree by Diana; the tree's fruits are made from the drops of hail and snow still sticking to the nymph's hair.<sup>71</sup>

66 Sannazaro, *Salices* 109–113: 'Sed quamvis totos duratae corporis, / caudicibusque latus, virgultisque undique septae, / ac penitus Salices, sensus tamen unicus illis: / silvicolas vitare deos, et margine ripae / haerentes, medio procumbere fluminis alveo.' ('But, though they have grown hard in all their body's limbs, and though their flank is everywhere hedged with bark and with shoots, and they are completely Willows, nevertheless one emotion remains theirs: to elude the woodland gods and, clinging to the edge of the bank, to lean out over the mid-channel of the stream.' Trans. Putnam).

67 Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 11, 340–366. Cf. Peters, "Die Topographie" 152.

68 Sannazaro, *Salices* 27–34.

69 Sannazaro, *Elegies* 11, 4, 3: 'Arboris umbriferae casus referamus acerbos. / Non erat haec nostro fabula nota solo.' ('Let us tell the bitter misfortunes of a shady tree. This story was not known in our land.' Trans. Putnam).

70 On the poem's numerous allusions to topography around Naples, see Putnam's commentary in his edition of Sannazaro's *Latin Poetry* 478–479.

71 Sannazaro, *Elegies* 11, 4, 21–60.

Sed tamen ante alios lacrimas in stipites fudit  
 Faunus, et haec tristes addit ad inferias.  
 'Inter silvicolas o non ignota sorores,  
 nunc morus, duris candida corticibus  
 vive diu, et nostros semper tege fronde capillos,  
 cedat ut ipsa tuis acuta comis.  
 Tu numquam miserae maculabere sanguine Thysses,  
 immemor heu fati ne videare tui.  
 Tu, nec fata negant, niveis uberrima pomis,  
 his olim stabis frondea limitibus;  
 et circum puerique canent, facilesque puellae,  
 ducentes festos ad tua sacra choros.'<sup>72</sup>

However, as in the case of Strozzi's *Lucilla*, it is a two-step metamorphosis we are dealing with here, thanks to the intervention of the rejected lover. Faunus, grieving over the loss of Morinna, sanctions the result of the metamorphosis by decreeing that the blood of Thisbe shall never stain the fruits of the white mulberry.

The entire myth Sannazaro coins is an obvious challenge to Ovid, beginning with the name of the nymph Morinna – Ovid's elegiac *puella* went by the name of Corinna –<sup>73</sup> and culminating in the interdict of a "later" Ovidian metamorphosis that is uttered by the mourning Faunus, thereby drawing a line between the well-established myth of Pyramus and Thisbe on the one hand and Sannazaro's new one on the other. Mentioning Thisbe explicitly invokes the intertextual link with the fourth book of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, where the canonical account of the story of Pyramus and Thisbe is presented.<sup>74</sup> Thus,

72 Sannazaro, *Elegies* II, 4, 67–76 ('But even so Faunus, more than the others, poured out his tears on the trunk, and he added this to the sad obsequies: 'Not unknown among the sisters who cherish the woods, now Morus, white with hard bark, may you live long and always cover our locks with your foliage so that the needled pine herself yields to your leaves. You, alas, in case you seem unmindful of your fate, will never be spotted with the blood of pitiable Thisbe. You – and the fates do not refuse it – within these precincts will one day stand leafy, richly abundant with snow-white fruit, and around about both the youths and the indulgent girls will sing, as they perform celebratory dances at your rites.' Trans. Putnam).

73 Corinna makes a first appearance in Ovid's *Amores* I, 5 and the poet bids her a last farewell in III, 12. Sannazaro's parenthesis 'hoc illi nomen, et omen erat' ('this was her name as well as her omen', trans. Putnam) in *Elegies* II, 4, 18 therefore may be considered a deliberate double entendre, pointing to the Ovidian character.

74 Ovid, *Metamorphoses* IV, 55–166.



Sannazaro places emphasis on his multilayered inversion of the Ovidian model here: not only does he oppose Ovid's black mulberry with a white mulberry, but he also introduces the interdicted future metamorphosis with an utterance by the living rejected lover, while Ovid's Thisbe, the character dying of love for Pyramus, conversely states that the metamorphosis of the mulberry shall take place as an everlasting memorial. Note the striking opposition of the double negative 'ne immemor' in Faunus's speech with Thisbe's last words, 'gemini monumenta cruoris'.<sup>75</sup> The white mulberry tree was in fact unknown in antiquity and made its way to Europe only later, as Sannazaro might have concluded from its lack of evidence in ancient natural history.<sup>76</sup> This strategy of explaining the origin of a plant that antiquity could not have known is complementary to overwriting the actual and well-established etymology of Posillipo in Proteus's song in the *Piscatoria*. He thus emulates and surpasses his Ovidian model not only by coining a new myth, but also by attaching this myth to an object that simply was not there in Augustan times, thereby claiming uniqueness and primacy for his creation diachronically rather than topographically.

### Conclusion

To summarise: Strozzi and Sannazaro both upgrade and enhance their contemporary whereabouts as opposed to antiquity by assigning unique features to them via aetiological mythopoeia. Strozzi does so in a topographic dimension; Sannazaro playfully tampers with chronology, harnessing his epoch's superior

75 Ovid, *Metamorphoses* IV, 161; Sannazaro, *Elegies* II, 4, 72.

76 Hünemörder C., "Maulbeerbaum", in *Der Neue Pauly*, vol. 7 (Stuttgart – Weimar: 1999) 1043. Cf. Pliny's *Natural History* XV, 27, where the author describes the ripening process of the mulberry from white to black. Sannazaro's teacher and predecessor, Giovanni Pontano, was head of the academy in Naples and treated the influx of new plant species thanks to Portuguese discoveries in Asia and the New World in his didactic *De Hortis Hesperidum*, cf. Hofmann H., "Adveniat tandem Typhis qui detegat orbis. Columbus in Neo-Latin Epic Poetry", in Haase W. – Meyer R. (eds.), *The Classical Tradition and the Americas*, vol. 1, *European Images of the Americas and the Classical Tradition*, pt. 1 (Berlin – New York: 1994) 420–656, here 425–426. Since the weeping willow was probably unknown in antiquity as well, we might assume that Sannazaro had followed a similar strategy in the *Salices*, cf. Hünemörder C., "Weide [2] (Baumart)" in *Der Neue Pauly*, vol. 12, 2 (Stuttgart – Weimar: 2002) 416–417. However, as the natural object in question is far less unequivocal here than the binary option of mulberries being either black or white, it is hardly possible to trace Sannazaro's knowledge of the taxonomy of willows and his intention to imply it in his playful treatment of ancient knowledge.

knowledge of the natural world to mythological inventions in the fashion of the classics. Strozzi's peculiar account of the nymph Cedrea's metamorphosis is a particular application of this mode rather than an exception to the rule. The fact that the Ferrarese *guacus* is unable to outshout the Ovidian night-ingle does not mean it is not there: in a dialogue with Pontano, the nymph Glaucia even repeatedly affirms its visibility as both a remainder and reminder of the metamorphosis.

Although presented in a predominantly playful manner, in all of the cases presented, nymphs invented from scratch by their respective poets were instrumental in supplementing the well-known and well-studied mythographic legacy of antiquity, and thereby bridged the gap between the humanists' day and antiquity, thus bestowing authority on their own surroundings. For this purpose, nymphs such as Lucilla, Cedrea, Morinna, and many more could be easily created and subsequently consumed in mythopoetic fiction.

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# Our White Ladies on the Graves: Historicisations of Nymphs in Early Modern Antiquarianism

*Bernd Roling*

## I Introduction

Classical nymphs today appear to us as a subject of literature or art history, they inhabit the idylls and eclogues of the bucolic genre and the frescoes of a Renaissance villa.<sup>1</sup> In this paper I would like to show, through a few examples, that they were not necessarily limited to this territory, the history of literature and art, and, especially, that they did not necessarily find their home solely in classical antiquity. What was the relationship of the nymphs, and along with them many other gods and goddesses, to the sites at which they were worshipped? Was this relation perhaps more than just a question of iconography and architectural history, namely a question of concrete practices and experience? What, in truth, filled a temple with life, and why should this life withdraw from it with the arrival of Christianity? I would like to show, further, how in the mid-seventeenth century scholars who can be regarded as part of the great movement of antiquarianism began step by step to set archaeology, literature, folklore into relation with each other, in order to gain a better picture of the phenomenon of the nymphs. It should become clear that here the study of the history of the Mother Goddesses cautiously called into being an early predecessor of the comparative study of religion.

## II Jean Picardt and the Dutch ‘White Ladies’

In 1660 Jean Picardt, who is still today well known in the Netherlands, published his description of the province of Drenthe and its neighbouring regions Friesland and Emsland.<sup>2</sup> Picardt himself was from Schüttorf, went to school in

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1 I would like to thank Orla Mulholland for her translation of the paper and Dorothee Huff (Göttingen) and Cornelia Selent (Münster) for helpful discussions.

2 On Johan Picardt as historian of Drenthe see the very useful survey of Gerding M.A.W., *Johan Picardt (1600–1670). Drenthe's eerste geschiedsschrijver* (Assen: 1997), passim, and

Steinfurt, studied medicine in Leiden and succeeded in a career as a cleric in the service of the Count of Bentheim. His *Korte Beschryvinge van eenige verge-tene Antiquiteten* is the first history of this region. Picardt recorded as a sight specially worth seeing in his homeland the barrows or *Hünengräber*, megalithic monuments, that were found in some places in Drenthe. Picardt himself called them *berghjes* and observed that many of these religious sites were the tombs of giants who had been able to survive the catastrophe of the Flood.<sup>3</sup> As was noted by Jan Albert Bakker a few years ago, a similar view was taken at the end of the seventeenth century by other scholars who took an interest in these megalithic graves, such as Hermann Conring, who had addressed them in Helmstedt,<sup>4</sup> or Johannes Daniel Major,<sup>5</sup> who at the same time had begun to catalogue them in Schleswig-Holstein.<sup>6</sup> Picardt himself, however, did not regard all the barrows of Friesland as giants' graves. For him some of the *berghjes* were certainly of later date: they could have been constructed in the Roman period and been set up as burial and memorial sites for Roman legionaries, for the army of Varus or other troops that had been stationed in the region.

However, Picard noted, these burial and cult sites had a special feature. From time immemorial, out of the caves beneath their stones the White Ladies had appeared, the *witte wijwen*, as they were called in Dutch: white-clad, fairy-like beings of non-human nature. At times by these Ladies' grottoes one could hear the lamentations down below of the men and women whom the White Ladies had forced down into their caverns. Sometimes people had even returned from these caves, having seen marvellous sights, though they refused to divulge any more about their experiences. These were nymphs, Picardt states, *nymphae montanae*, or *Berg-duywels*, who had made their home below these apparently Roman graves. For the local people of the surrounding countryside, these ladies had another role too: they were able to foresee the future and they

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recently Esser R., *The Politics of Memory. The Writing of Partition in the Seventeenth-Century Low Countries* (Leiden: 2012) 262–281.

- 3 Picardt Johan, *Korte beschryvinge van eenige vergetene en verborgene Antiquiteiten der Provintien en Landen gelegen tusschen de Noord-Zee, de Yssel, Emse en Lippe* (Amsterdam, Goesdesbergh: 1660) 1. deel, dist. 8, 43–46.
- 4 Conring Hermann, *De antiquissimo statu Helmestadii et vicinae coniecturae* (Helmstedt, Henning Müller: 1665) e.g. 5–6.
- 5 Maior Johann Daniel, *Bevölkertes Cimbrien, oder, Die zwischen der Ost- und West-See gelegene Halb-Insel Deutschlands: nebst dero ersten Einwohnern und ihrer eigentlichen durch viel und grosse Umwege geschehenen Ankunfft, summarischer weise vorgestellet* (Plön, Schmied: 1692) ch. 27–28, 38–42.
- 6 Bakker J.A., *Megalithic Research in the Netherlands, 1547–1911. From 'Giant's Beds' and 'Pillars of Hercules' to Accurate Investigations* (Leiden: 2010), there on Picardt 40–50.

appeared suddenly at the bedside of women in labour; at childbirth they often also appeared as a helper in time of need. Picardt himself had no doubt that this was a deeply diabolical phenomenon. They were just one of Satan's many schemes, as any good Calvinist theologian would have to admit.<sup>7</sup>

It is not hard to see that, in the form of the barrow-dwellers described by Picardt, the White Ladies or Mountain Nymphs, we are here dealing with a variant of the fairies and that the megalithic burials had for him taken on the character of a fairy mound. The White Ladies are little more than the Dutch variation of the fairy belief of Romance countries, or the Anglo-Saxon elves.<sup>8</sup> These were dangerous beings of otherworldly beauty, with a different kind of corporeality, who lived in territories that were spatially and often temporally separate from the human world and who, despite their potential danger, could also play a protective role. Already in 1558 the Dutchman Cornelius Kempius in his work on the origin of the Frisians had written of the White Ladies of his homeland, these same *Witte Wijwen*. They appeared at night and their magical radiance was near-impossible to resist. They lived under mounds, said Kempius, sometimes sang seductively and carried people off to their strange world, from where one could hear the lamentations of their victims, as Picardt too had confirmed. The Frisians feared them, Kempius reported, for they stole children. In the time of King Louis the Pious, Saint Odulph, one of the first Frisian saints, had even written a protective prayer to keep the White Ladies off the trail of the person who recited it; anyone who recited the blessing, which Kempius printed as an appendix to his work, would be safe from them.<sup>9</sup>

The Dutch and North German folklore, and also the tradition of the Emsland, still today knows the White Lady in its stories, in a range of variations; local historians in the German-Dutch border region recorded reports of them in this area even in the nineteenth century. Through Kempius, the White Lady came to appear as a variant of the diabolic fairy in early modern demonologies, treatises that had collected a long history of devilish threats in female form.

7 Picardt, *Korte beschryvinge van eenige vergetene en verborgene Antiquiteiten* 1. deel, dist. 9, 46–48.

8 As a survey on the Elves and Fairies in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times and their demonisation see e.g. the studies Latham M.W., *The Elizabethan Fairies. The Fairies of Folklore and the Fairies of Shakespeare* (New York: 1930; reprint, New York: 1972) 44–64; Spence L., *British Fairy Origins* (London: 1946) 132–155; Purkiss D., *At the Bottom of the Garden. A Dark History of Fairies, Hobgoblins, and Other Troublesome Things* (New York: 2000) 85–115; and Briggs K.M., *The Anatomy of Puck. An Examination of Fairy Beliefs among Shakespeare's Contemporaries and Successors* (London: 1959) 8–43.

9 Kempius Cornelius, *De origine, situ, qualitate et quantitate Frisiae et rebus a Frisiis olim praeclare gestis* (Cologne, Gosvinus Cholinus: 1588) lib. III, 341–342.

Pierre de Loyer mentions them,<sup>10</sup> as do Francesco de Torreblanca, another demonologist,<sup>11</sup> and the famous Martin Anton Delrio in his *Disquisitiones magicæ*.<sup>12</sup> They become part of a way of reading natural divinities that had become established since the Church Fathers: it was a genealogy that began with the nymphs of the ancient world, together with their sisters the Dryads and Hamadryads, and continued through the fairies of the Middle Ages and on to the early modern period. Augustine in his *City of God* had warned the Roman Christians against the satyrs and nymphs, but also against the so-called *Dusii*, female figures who were apparently widespread in the Latin world;<sup>13</sup> according to Augustine, they were *incubi*, devilish embodiments of fallen angels, with whose help these demons wanted to win power over humans.<sup>14</sup> The Oreads or nymphs of the ancient world were, all of them, tools of Satan. In the sixth century Martin of Braga, in his work on the superstitions of the rural people of Spain, followed the bishop of Hippo. The farmers of his homeland, he said, despite their Christianisation, still venerated the nymphs and Dryads; the latter, however, must rank as manifestations of the devil, who wanted to use their false beauty to bring people to ruin.<sup>15</sup> Medieval demonologists, Geoffrey of Auxerre or William of Auvergne, read the belief in fairies in the French-speaking world as part of this history of seduction.<sup>16</sup> The fairy, like the nymph, was a fallen angel who had taken on female form in order to seduce humans

- 10 Le Loyer Pierre, *A Treatise of Spectres and strange Sights, Visions and Apparations, appearing sensibly to Men, wherein is deliverd the Nature of Spirites, Angels and Divels, their Power and Properties, and also of Witches, and Sorcers, and Enchanters and such like* (London, Matthew Lownes: 1605) ch. 3, fol. 17r–20v.
- 11 Torreblanca Francesco, *Daemonologia sive de magia naturali, daemoniaca, licita et illicita libri IV* (Mainz, Johannes Schönwetter: 1623) lib. II, ch. 29, 283a–285b.
- 12 Delrio Martin Antonius, *Disquisitionum magicarum libri VI*, 2 vols. (Louvain, Gerardus Rivius: 1599–1600) vol. 1, lib. II, q. 27, sectio 2, 321–322, 332–333; and see in addition idem, *Syntagma tragodiae latinae seu novus commentarius in decem tragoedias, quae vulgo Senecae ascribuntur*, 2 vols. (Paris, Pierre Billaine: 1619–1620), on the nymphs vol. 2, *Commentarius in Herculem Oetaeum*, v. 246, 311.
- 13 On the *Dusii* of the roman tradition see Lecouteux C., *Les nains et les elfes au Moyen Âge* (Paris: 1988) 169–174, and Martineau A., *Le nain et le chevalier. Essai sur les nains français du Moyen Âge* (Paris: 2003) 116–117.
- 14 Augustine, *De civitate Dei libri XXII*, ed. B. Dombart – A. Kalb, 2 vols. (CCSL 47/48) (Turnhout: 1955) vol. 2, lib. xv, ch. 23, 488–489.
- 15 Martinus of Braga, *De correctione rusticorum*, in idem, *Opera omnia*, ed. C.W. Barlow (New Haven: 1950) §§ 7–8, 186–189.
- 16 Geoffrey of Auxerre, *Super Apocalypsim*, ed. F. Gastaldelli (Rome: 1970) Sermo xv, 183–185; see also Harf-Lancner L., *Les fées au Moyen Âge. Morgane et Mélusine. La naissance des fées*, Nouvelle Bibliothèque du Moyen Âge 8 (Geneva: 1984) 47–57.

into both sin and idolatry. Through William of Auvergne and others this interpretation of the fairy became standard in early modern demonologies and was repeated into the seventeenth century.<sup>17</sup> Why would the White Ladies of Friesland have fared any better?

### III Dutch *Nymphae* in a Chain of Tradition

With his interpretation of the White Lady in 1660, Johan Picardt was thus offering what, at first sight, was little more than one of the last instances of an early modern demonology, both catholic and protestant, which by this date was already in retreat. However, what is of far more interest than this general evaluation of the White Lady is the link Picardt makes to what he believed were Roman tomb monuments, that is, to a classical cult which, it seems, was still being practised at these ancient sites. Was there thus a continuity not just in these demonic beings, but also a functional continuity in the ritual offered to the nymphs across different eras and into the seventeenth century? It seems that the megalithic tombs, whether they were temples or not, had provided a home for the gods through all the centuries. It was thus possible to tell a continuous history of religion that ran from the classical nymphs to the beliefs of the rural Frisians in the seventeenth century and to their wish even then to venerate the fearsome yet fascinating beings in the *berghjes* of Drenthe.

If we survey the sources from the period, we see that such tenacity was not an entirely unusual phenomenon; other contemporary antiquarians depict similar customs. As an example I mention only Johann Döderlein and his extensive work on the antiquities and paganism of the 'Nordgau', that is the northern part of present-day Bavaria and Franconia.<sup>18</sup> In 1700 Döderlein's informant Johann Feuerlein reported that in the little Middle-Franconian village of Emetzheim near Weißenburg stood the remains of a Roman temple which the local ecclesiastical powers had, it seems, finally destroyed. The most notable remains left of the cult site were statues which Feuerlein glosses with the name of a biblical idol, the so-called Mitzphletet, but which can be identified as statues of Aphrodite or Astarte and, especially, Priapus. With Protestant indignation and solid background knowledge, Feuerlein explains the role of

17 William of Auvergne, *De universo*, in idem, *Opera omnia*, 2 vols. (Paris: 1674; reprint, Frankfurt a.M.: 1963) secunda pars, pars III, ch. 5, 1022b–1023b, and ch. 24, 1066a–1068a.

18 Döderlein Johann Alexander, *Antiquitates gentilismi Nordgaviensis, das ist kurtzer, doch gründlicher Bericht von dem Heydenthum der alten Nordgauer, aus unterschiedlichen Monumenten des Alterthums deduciret* (Regensburg, Seiffart: 1734) § 24, 33–34.



Priapus in classical culture. Images of a male god with clearly erect member served the cult of fertility; women honoured them if they were afflicted by childlessness.<sup>19</sup> Augustine in the *City of God* had described how women in the accompanying ritual were even required to mount the phallus of the Priapus if they wanted to escape childlessness.<sup>20</sup> There was further upset for Döderlein in the remark of a local pastor that women of his own parish still followed this belief and until recently had frequented the temple ruins with the same purpose, until the public authorities had evidently intervened to put an end to the monstrosity.

In fact Picardt's White Ladies, and with them the belief in cult sites in continuous use from classical times, appear also in the works of another Dutch writer who studied similar phenomena. In 1676 the Calvinist theologian Jacob Geusius published his *Victimae humanae*, whose overall aim was to provide a history of human sacrifice. In this extremely unpleasant work, Geusius proposed the thesis that the practice of human sacrifice had begun with the sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham and was therefore ultimately to be blamed on the Jews. The fact that the work soon provoked passionate treatises written against it reveals that such a thesis could no longer be presented without opposition in the liberal Netherlands.<sup>21</sup> However, Geusius also discusses the barrows of his Frisian homeland, the spread of which he traces into the County of Bentheim and to Hümmeling in the Emsland. They too, Geusius stresses, were cradles of barbaric rites, among which human sacrifice could not be ruled out. Above all, however, at these burial sites, Geusius believed, 'Our White Ladies', who were regularly seen around the barrow stones, had been honoured into recent times. When this rite came to an end and until when it had been practised by the Emsland farming communities, Geusius does not venture to say.<sup>22</sup>

It fell to another Dutchman to set the White Ladies or 'mountain nymphs' and their tomb-temples into a wider context in religious history, but now

19 Feuerlein Johann Georg Christoph – Mützel Philipp Samuel (resp.), *Miphlezeth suo cum primis memorabile Emmentzheimium* (Wittenberg, Gerdes: 1700) esp. §§ 16–17, fol. Cr–C2r, and Feuerlein Johann Georg Christoph – Friese Johann Sebastian (resp.), *Miphlezethem Emmentzheimensium denuo curiosorum oculis expositum* (Wittenberg, Gerdes: 1701), there §§ 7–9, fol. B2v–B4r.

20 Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, vol. 1, lib. VI, ch. 9, 178–179.

21 See as refutation of Geusius Viva Isaak, *Vindex sanguinis sive Vindiciae secundum veritatem, quibus Judaei ab infanticidiis et victima humana contra Jacobum Geusium vindicantur* (Nuremberg, Knorzius: 1681), passim.

22 Geusius Jacob, *Victimae humanae complexa modos, ceremonias et tempora, quibus olim homines Diis suis immolabant, et humanum sanguinem libabant*, 2 vols. (Groningen, Lens: 1675) vol. 2, ch. 15, 332–335, 350–351.

without any direct reference to demonology. In 1700 Willem Goeree, who is today probably best known for his Dutch encyclopedia of the art of drawing,<sup>23</sup> published an extensive *Mozaische Historie der Hebreeuwse Kerke*, a history of Scripture which was formally modelled on Flavius Josephus and which attempted to illuminate as far as possible the era of the patriarchs and fill it with meaning.<sup>24</sup> Today this work is hardly known at all. In chapter 13, Goeree discusses Rebecca's many years of infertility and the attempts to solve the problem. For 25 years God had made the wife of Isaac wait for the birth of her son and tested her in her faith, just as already Sarah had had to wait a similar length of time for her confinement. Likewise, much time had had to pass before the pregnancy of Elizabeth with John the Baptist. Goeree stresses that only God in his mercy could intervene in nature and come to the aid of an apparently sterile woman; it was a matter of grace. However, people did not always have patience and had sought assistance elsewhere. Fertility cult must therefore have begun for that reason, Goeree argues, with a history that ran from antiquity through the Middle Ages up to the present, with its own goddesses. Central to these cults was the moon, whose sphere of influence was believed to have governed the laws of birth. Did not the gravitational pull of the waxing and waning moon determine whether boys or girls were born? Had not the Saviour in the revelation healed the lunatic? Already in the Bible the prophet Jeremiah had complained that the women of Israel offered worship to the Queen of Heaven, the *Malakhat ha-shamayim*, and had even baked cakes for her.<sup>25</sup> Was this not the start of all cults of Mother Goddesses? The Queen of Heaven had become the protectress of those giving birth but at the same time a threatening power who could become dangerous if her will was not respected.<sup>26</sup>

23 Goeree Willem, *Inleydinge tot de al-gemeene Teycken-Konst* (Middelburgh, Smidt: 1668). The book has been reprinted and translated many times.

24 Aside his work as theorist of painting there is almost no research on Goeree available, see only van den Heuvel C., "Willem Goeree (1635–1711) en de ontwikkeling van een algemeene architectuurtheorie in den Nederlanden", *Bulletin Koninklijke Nederlandse Oudheidkundige Bond* 96 (1997) 154–176.

25 *Jeremias* 54, 17–19.

26 Goeree Willem, *Mozaïze Historie der Hebreeuwse Kerke, zoo als dezelve was in de Stam-Huyzen der H. Vaders des Ouden Verbonds, voor en onder de belofte, en in alle de plegtelijke toebereydzelen van het dienstbaar Ierusalem, en doorgaans met veel naauwkeurige print-verbeeldingen gestoffeerd*, 4 vols. (Amsterdam, Atheur: 1700) vol. 1, Dertiende Hoofdstuk, 439–446.

On the back of scholars like John Selden or Gerhardus Johannes Vossius, Goeree begins to follow up the origin of belief in nymphs;<sup>27</sup> his sources are above all the Roman coins that he was able to get access to in Amsterdam. The first fertility goddesses had been worshipped by the Romans in the figure of *Venus genetrix*, depicted on a large number of coins of the imperial period, as the goddess Lucina, in whom the light of spring could have been manifested, and above all as the manybreasted Diana, *Diana multimammia*. The Lupercalia and Saturnalia were dedicated to these goddesses, Catullus had hymned them.<sup>28</sup> The rites of the Saturnalia were echoed in the *Eclogues* of Virgil, in the god Pan stalking his nymphs. However, this cult had not ceased but had been maintained long into the Middle Ages. Goeree discovered even more transformations of it. Buxtorf's translations of Rabbinic literature revealed that Judaism had known of the Lilith, a *nachtspookster* whom Jewish mythology had raised to the position of Adam's first wife.<sup>29</sup> This half-demonic being had once refused to obey her husband and so she was banished to the desert. From then on she threatened women in labour and had to be placated with special amulets and ceremonies. Was this apocryphal figure, a child-murdering demon of exceptional beauty, who was multiplied further by the tradition of *Venus genetrix*, was she not surely also the archetype of the White Lady, the *Witten Wijwen*, Goeree asked? Did these figures not link the attributes wisdom and the colour white, since they foretold the future and were encountered in dazzling white garments? These women, too, helped at childbirth, foretold the child's destiny, yet at the same time represented a great danger for both mother and child, as Picardt had shown. Their goodwill had therefore to be won in conception and birth. Nymphs, fairies and the apocryphal Lilith could thus be set into the context of a history of religion that bridged the gap between the practices of the ancient world and the folklore of the present, much as the old cult sites had simply remained in use. It was with the same justification that the mothers of Friesland even in his own time covered the bed of a woman giving birth, to keep the mother in labour from the reach of these White Ladies. In the same

27 On Diana and her oriental predecessors see e.g. Selden John, *De diis Syris syntagmata duo*, 2nd edition (Leipzig, Laurenz Körner: 1672) Syntagma II, ch. 2, 231–262; Vossius Gerhardus Johannes, *De Theologia gentili et Physiologia christiana*, 2 vols. (Amsterdam, Johann Blaeu: 1668) vol. 2, lib. VII, ch. 1, 154–156, and more. On Selden's crucial role in the emerging oriental studies and studies in comparative religion see Toomer G.J., *John Selden: A Life in Scholarship*, Oxford-Warburg Studies, 2 vols. (Oxford: 2009) vol. 1, 211–256.

28 Catullus, *Carmina*, ed. R. Ellis (Oxford: 1967) Carmen 34.

29 Buxtorf Johann, *Synagoga Judaica de Judaeorum fide, ritibus, ceremoniis, tam publicis, et sacris, quam privatis, in domestica vivendi ratione*, 3rd edition (Basel, Emanuel König: 1680) ch. 4, 85–86.

way that the present could be illuminated by the ancient world, the present helped achieve a proper understanding of the religious practice of the ancient world.<sup>30</sup>

#### IV The Antiquarian Construction of a Nymph: Johann Georg Keysler and Jacques Martin

Goeree's attempt to construct a grand line of tradition in the cult of fairies and mothers was imitated by numerous far more serious followers. In the second half of this paper I would like to present the two most important examples among the antiquarians of the early eighteenth century; they still picked up Picardt's White Ladies, but for them demonology no longer played a role. These are Johann Georg Keysler and Jacques Martin. Both offered an unbroken chain of filiation of the phenomenon, which was able to undergo transformations at a secondary level, but which, both scholars believed, in substance always remained the same. From Roman antiquity and its artefacts through the Middle Ages to the present ran a line into which all variants of the Central European cult of mothers, nymphs and fairies could be inscribed.

##### 1 *Johann Georg Keysler and the Mothers*

Johan Georg Keysler was part of a group from Northern Germany who in the early eighteenth century endeavoured to achieve a more broadly based assessment of Germanic and Celtic antiquities, and who at the same time wanted to set them in the context of the Graeco-Roman world.<sup>31</sup> His work *Antiquitates septentrionales et celticae selectae*, published in 1720, benefited from the learning of the first Swedish and Danish scholars of the ancient world, such as the works of Ole Worm, Bartholin the Younger and Olaus Verelius, but also from the first large-scale English collections of a figure like William Camden.<sup>32</sup> At the same time Keysler made enthusiastic use of the first French excavations

30 Goeree, *Mozaize Historie der Hebreeuwse Kerke* vol. 1, Dertiende Hoofdstuk, 447–452.

31 For a general survey on the role of megalith culture in sixteenth and seventeenth century Germany see Liebers C., "Neolithische Megalithgräber und ihre Deutung. Großsteingräber zwischen biblisch geprägtem Weltbild, Volksüberlieferung und empirischer Untersuchung", in Hakelberg D. – Wiwjorra I. (eds.), *Vorwelten und Vorzeiten. Archäologie als Spiegel historischen Bewußtseins in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Wiesbaden: 2010) 423–446.

32 Bartholin Thomas, *Antiquitatum Danicarum de causis contemptae a Danis adhuc gentilibus mortis libri tres* (Kopenhagen, Bockenhoffer: 1689).

of Roman and Celtic sanctuaries, of Nicolas Chorier's *Antiquites de Vienne* or Jean Guénebauld's obscure druidic grave monument at Dijon, the so-called Tomb of Chyndonax.<sup>33</sup> In addition to this, Keysler also used the great collections of inscriptions that had been compiled since the early seventeenth century for the former provinces of the Roman Empire, above all the collections of Jan Gruter and Jacobus Sponius, which had hitherto not really been exploited fully.<sup>34</sup> Johann Keysler's great service was to order all these sources into a systematic whole. He held a position as private tutor in Lauenburg in Schleswig-Holstein and, despite his membership of many learned societies, for the most part worked as an independent scholar. Keysler wrote the first history of the nymphs, complete with their link to the remains of classical culture.<sup>35</sup>

It was a striking fact, Keysler begins, that on a large number of votive objects in the Germano-Celtic area from France to northern Italy, women are depicted, arranged in threes, and addressed in the inscriptions as *Matronae* or *Matres*. Often they were given an additional name too, which made them the Mother of the given region, though other epithets were entirely enigmatic. Keysler was able to present a whole gallery of these figures, in Vienne, Andernach, Lyon, Nijmegen and in many other places. Today the generic name "matronae" has become established for this type of mother-goddess figure. They are attested only in these inscriptions but are found widely in the northern part of the ancient empire and can be traced throughout late antiquity.<sup>36</sup> Keysler was the first to recognise their common features. What was this phenomenon?

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- 33 Guénebauld Jean, *Le réveil de Chyndonax, Prince de Vacies, Druydes, Celtiques, Diënois, avec la sainteté, religion, et diversité des cérémonies observées aux anciennes sepultures* (Dijon, Guyot: 1621), and Chorier Nicolas, *Les recherches sur les antiquitez de la Ville Vienne* (Lyon, Claude Baudrand: 1658).
  - 34 Gruter Jan, *Inscriptiones antiquae totius orbis Romani, in corpus absolutissimum redactae*, 2 vols. (Heidelberg, Commelin: 1602–03), and Spon Jacob, *Recherche des Antiquités et Curiosités de la Ville de Lyon, ancienne Colonie des Romains et Capitale de la Gaule Celtique* (Lyon, Cellier: 1675).
  - 35 Keysler Johann Georg, *Antiquitates selectae et celticae* (Hannover, Förster: 1720), there *Dissertatio de mulieribus fatidicis*, 369–510. A few years earlier Keysler published a study on the dutch goddess Nehalennia, see Keysler Johann Georg, *Exercitatio historico-philologica de Dea Nehalennia, numine veterum Walachorum topico* (Celle, Hoffmann: 1717).
  - 36 For a good survey on the *matronae* and their epithet see the papers of Schauerte G., "Darstellungen mütterlicher Gottheiten in den römischen Nordwestprovinzen", in Petrikovits H. von (ed.), *Matronen und verwandte Gottheiten* (Köln: 1987) 55–102; Neumann G., "Die germanischen Matronen-Beinamen" in *ibidem* 103–132; and Schmidt K.H., "Die keltischen Matronennamen", in *ibidem* 133–154.

These omnipresent “mothers”, the *matronae*, Keysler stated, must have been the first traceable variants of the Romano-Germano-Celtic hill and spring nymphs, who from then onwards would populate the lived pagan world of old Europe in numerous variants.<sup>37</sup> Their nature oscillated between deified druidess, prophetess, fertility goddess who was divine from the start, or etheric natural divinities and those half-human fairies which had been debated for so long in the demonologies of the Middle Ages and early modern period and which had been both observed and worshipped in both France and Germany. These beings had found their echo in the Moirai of the Edda, the Old Norse *Parcae*, who must correspond to the *matronae*, even in the well-known fact that they appeared in threes. The Old Norse saga literature had taken account of these women, Keysler maintained following Thomas Bartholin, partly also in the form of Valkyries.<sup>38</sup> Keysler intentionally leaves open the question of whether these women, at the start of their history, had already possessed a divine character or whether it was only in a second stage that they had developed from prophets to goddesses. Other figures, too, could be integrated into this line of tradition, such as the famous Veleda,<sup>39</sup> the prophet of the tribe of the Bructeri once described by Tacitus, who had caused such problems for the Romans, or the half-divine prophetess Aurinia, also described by Tacitus, who had had a similar status.<sup>40</sup> They also included the no less enigmatic prophetesses whom Pomponius Mela and Strabo had localised on the ‘Isle de Sein’ off the coast of Brittany and whose oracle had been known throughout the entire ancient world.<sup>41</sup> They had lived in the forest, in the wilderness and in temples and were worshipped and sought out by humans for their advice.<sup>42</sup>

37 Keysler, *Antiquitates, Dissertatio de mulieribus* §§ 6–22, 378–394.

38 Keysler, *Antiquitates, Dissertatio de mulieribus* §§ 23–24, 394–399; see also Bartholin, *Antiquitatum Danicarum* lib. III, ch. 1, 602–624.

39 On the early modern interpretation of Veleda and comparable figures see in detail soon Roling B., “Seeress in the Woods: The Early Modern Debate on Veleda, Aurinia and Vola”, in Göttler C. – Enenkel K.A.E. (eds.), *Spaces, Places and Times of Solitude in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Leiden: forthcoming).

40 Keysler, *Antiquitates, Dissertatio de mulieribus*, §§ 59–64, 472–489, and see Tacitus, *Historiae*, ed. E. Koestermann (Leipzig: 1969) lib. IV, § 61, § 65, and lib. V, § 22, § 24; idem, *Opera minora*, ed. M. Winterbottom – R.M. Ogilvie (Oxford: 1975) *Germania*, ch. 8, § 2; Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, ed. E. Cary, 9 vols. (London – Cambridge: 1968) lib. LXIV, ch. 5, Greek and English, vol. 8, 346–347.

41 Strabo, *The Geography*, ed. H.L. Jones – J.R. Sitlington Sterret, 8 vols. (London – Cambridge Mass.: 1960–70) lib. IV, ch. 4, § 6, Greek and English, vol. 2, 248–251; Pomponius Mela, *Chorographia*, ed. A. Silberman (Paris: 1988) lib. III, ch. 6, § 48, 81.

42 Keysler, *Antiquitates, Dissertatio de mulieribus* §§ 53–56, 448–456.

From these Mothers, Keysler continued, the fairies must also derive, as their home, as Picardt had shown, was likewise made in caves and ancient cult sites, as the ancient authors had also described. The folk traditions were able to explain the ancient artefacts, while the artefacts in turn documented the antiquity and continuity of these traditions. An overview of current sightings of fairies in France, which Chorier or Guénebauld were able to add to the discussion, revealed that these ancient temples and caves, if the local people were to be believed, were able to serve as a home for the fairies even in their own times. A White Lady had recently been seen near Dijon in a grotto, others had only a few decades previously still lived in the caves under Montmartre, as Guénebauld had shown.<sup>43</sup> In each case, these beings corresponded to the expectations with which they had been approached. The contemporary reports, irrespective of whether they were plausible, matched those of the fairy sightings of the high Middle Ages, such as had been collected, Keysler continues, especially by Gervase of Tilbury in the twelfth century.<sup>44</sup> In this case it was above all the child-stealing, in part even cannibalistic fairies that the historian had described, beings that lived in forests, as beautiful as they were dangerous, and seen more as a threat than a help; especially when giving birth one had to be sure of their favour. In Hincmar of Reims there was a reference to the *Dusii*, already mentioned by Augustine, but who apparently even in the Carolingian period enjoyed the worship of the half-Christianised population of the kingdom of the Franks.<sup>45</sup> In conclusion Keysler reconstructed an unbroken history of the nymphs.

## 2 *Jacques Martin and the Forest Nymphs of All Ages*

Another early eighteenth-century antiquarian, the French Benedictine Jacques Martin, went a step further than Keysler. To Martin we owe a whole gallery of works on the antiquities of France. He was one of the Maurines, who, along with Bernard de Montfaucon, Augustin Calmet and the famous Jean Mabillon, had provided a whole generation of great historians and antiquaries, whose achievements in palaeography, editorial scholarship, archaeology

43 Ibidem §§ 51–52, 445–448, and see for Keysler Guénebauld, *Le réveil de Chyndonax* 33; Chorier, *Les recherches sur les antiquitez* 168, and in addition Frey Janus Caecilius, *Philosophia Druidarum*, in idem, *Opuscula varia nusquam edita* (Paris, Pierre David: 1646) 8–9.

44 For a recent edition see Gervasius of Tilbury, *Otia imperialia*, ed. and trans. S.E. Banks – J.W. Binns (Oxford: 2002) lib. 111, ch. 85, Latin and English, 716–721, ch. 86, 724–727.

45 Hincmar of Reims, *De divortio Lotharii regis et Tetbergae reginae* (Migne Patrologia latina 125) (Paris: 1879) Interrogatio xv, cl. 717–718., D–A, col. 725, C.

and prehistory have still never been adequately recognized.<sup>46</sup> Martin's *Religion des Gaulois* appeared in 1727 and again in 1750, and was a standard work of early Celtic Studies;<sup>47</sup> it was followed in the next years by further, ambitious works by Martin.<sup>48</sup> Martin had read Keysler's discussions of the nymphs closely, he knew both ancient and medieval authors as well as the evidence from the early modern period, but above all he searched through France's ruined temples, churches and cemeteries for artefacts that would support his theses. Even more strongly than Keysler, Martin stressed the overarching continuity of worship of ancient mother goddesses that had survived the establishment of Christianity and the beginning of the early modern period and, as could be seen from Picardt, even the introduction of the Reformation. The traces of this worship could be found both in texts and in artefacts. However, Martin was sceptical about the inclusion in this tradition of the druidesses, whose deification Keysler had postulated, since the chastity of the druidesses, as described by the ancient authors, ran counter to the thoroughly sexual connotations of the agrarian cults.

At the origin of the worship of all nymphs, fairies and White Ladies, the Benedictine believed, stood the cult of Diana, a many-breasted moon goddess who was worshipped on account of her fertility, as had been attested already by Goeree. A few years previously, not far from the abbey of Faucogney, Martin's fellow Benedictine Montfaucon had found a statue of Diana with the crescent moon on her head; there was another near Clermont in the Auvergne. A remarkable female figure, crowned with snakes, which Martin regarded as also a variety of Diana, decorated the outer wall of an old, octagonal church in Montmorillon in Poitou.<sup>49</sup> Not all these statues would stand up as evidence of

46 See recently on the whole congregation and its members Lenain P., *Histoire littéraire des bénédictins de Saint-Maur*, 4 vols. (Louvain-La-Neuve: 2006–2014), and for a still very useful survey Tassin René Prosper, *Histoire littéraire de la Congrégation de Saint-Maur* (Bruxelles, Humblot: 1770), see there on Jacques Martin 683–690.

47 Martin Jacques, *La religion des Gaulois tirée des plus sûres sources de l'antiquité*, 2 vols. (Paris, Saugrain: 1727). Reprinted under the same title, 2 vols. (Amsterdam, Arkstede: 1750).

48 See e.g. Martin Jacques, *Explication de divers monumens singuliers, qui ont rapport à la religion des plus anciens peuples* (Paris, Lambert: 1739), there on Mithras 231–291, or Martin Jacques – De Brezillac Jean-François, *Histoire des Gaules, et des conquêtes des Gaulois, depuis leur origine jusqu'à la fondation de la monarchie française*, 2 vols. (Paris, Le Breton: 1752) and again in an extended version (Paris, Saugrain: 1780).

49 Martin, *La religion des Gaulois* vol. 2, lib. IV, ch. 13, 51–53, ch. 20, 104–10, ch. 21, 110–128; see also Montfaucon Bernard de, *Supplément au livre de l'antiquité expliquée et représentée en figures*, 5 vols. (Paris, Delaune: 1724) vol. 2, 221–230 and planche 43; Simeoni Gabriele,



pagan culture to modern eyes: in the last case, especially, it was probably nothing more than an ordinary allegory of the vices, not an ancient deity. However, it was not news, Martin stresses, that churches were erected on sites that had once served as cult sites for pagan gods. Already Gregory of Tours had provided plenty of examples of these spirits, *pythonissae*, venerated by the franconian peasants.<sup>50</sup> Diana had still been central to medieval fertility cults, as could be learned from mediaeval sources, which had already had a long career in the demonology of the early modern period. Burchard of Worms, an eleventh-century canon lawyer, had explicitly warned against nocturnal worship of Diana, who was venerated in grottoes and clearings in forests and in whose honour candles were lit in the darkness.<sup>51</sup> In his *Policraticus* John of Salisbury had picked up these accounts. As *feminae agrestes*, that is, nymphs, these strange women appeared out of nowhere and vanished in the same way. They were worshipped as *noctulae* or as *dominae nocturnae*, that is, “mistresses of the night”. Diana also appeared under the name Herodias.<sup>52</sup> Who else could this ‘présidente souveraine de la nuit’ be but the ancient Diana of the classical world, asked Martin? Earlier authors may have declared these figures to be manifestations of the Devil and the centre-point of a witches’ sabbath, but the enlightened Benedictine had no doubt: they were descendants of the ancient cult of the nymphs.<sup>53</sup> Keysler had been right to link them to the late antique *Matronae* and *Matres* found on so many inscriptions.<sup>54</sup> Perhaps their worship had once arrived in Europe from the Orient. Plutarch had reported the so-called “mothers” who were worshipped on Sicily,<sup>55</sup> where it was reported that they had originally come to the island from Crete; Theocritus had sung in

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*Description de la Limagne d'Auvergne en forme de dialogue, avec plusieurs médailles, statues, oracles, épitaphes, sentences et autres choses mémorables* (Lyon, Rouillé: 1561) 110–111, Marcel Guillaume, *Histoire de l'origine et des progrès de la monarchie française suivant l'ordre des temps*, 4 vols. (Paris, Denys Thierry: 1686) vol. 1, ch. 7, 32–34.

- 50 See for a female demon presiding over a group of demons in a church Gregory of Tours, *Historiarum libri decem*, ed. R. Buchner, 2 vols. (Darmstadt: 1972) vol. 1, lib. 11, ch. 21, Latin and German, 107–108, and for water spirits Gregory of Tours, *Liber in gloria confessorum* (*Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum* 1–2), ed. B. Krusch (Hannover: 1885) ch. 2, 299–300.
- 51 Burchard of Worms, *Decretorum liber* (Migne Patrologia latina 140) (Paris: 1880) col. 970, A–D.
- 52 John of Salisbury, *Policratici sive de nugis curialium et vestigiis philosophorum libri duo*, ed. C.C.J. Webb, 2 vols. (London: 1908; reprint, Frankfurt: 1965) vol. 1, lib. 11, ch. 17, 100–102.
- 53 Martin, *La religion des Gaulois* vol. 2, lib. IV, ch. 13, 53–60.
- 54 Martin, *La religion des Gaulois* vol. 2, lib. IV, ch. 23, 147–153.
- 55 Plutarch, *Lives*, 8 vols., ed. B. Perrin (Cambridge, Mass.: 1961) vol. 5, Marcellus, ch. 20, Greek and English, 488–489.

his *Idylls* of how the farmers had feared nymphs like Nychea or Euneika.<sup>56</sup> The *Parcae*, whom Keysler had brought into the discussion, found a place here too, as Burchard of Worms, already mentioned, had described these *Parcae* also as *Fata*, as fairies.<sup>57</sup>

However, Martin managed to find yet more links in the long chain of filiations, which went beyond the figurations collected by either Keysler or Goeree. The ancient inscriptions recorded not just a whole range of mothers or matrons, but also a distinctive variety of them, the *Sylvanae* or *Sylvaticae*, who evidently enjoyed similar worship in the Gallic and West Germanic region. Had Augustine not spoken of the *Sylvani*, just as Burchard of Worms in the eleventh century had maintained that French farmers still offered sacrifices to them? In the Cabinet of the Jesuits of Besançon, Martin discovered a bronze statuette of a horned woman with a cornucopia – it is from the third or fourth century and is now in the British Museum – which for him became the decisive piece of evidence. In fact, this figure today remains an important piece of evidence for the cult of horned gods and goddesses in the Celtic world, as is eloquently documented not least by the far better known chased decorations on the famous Gundestrup Cauldron. Was this not a Sylph, a forest nymph, which could be set alongside the goddesses and fairies? That these figures too had not vanished from the Celtic cultural world was finally revealed for Martin by a fellow countryman of his own time who had devoted himself to these creatures, namely Nicolas Henri Montfaucon, whose bizarre treatise on the Sylphs, the *Comte de Gabalis*, would go on to have a massive success in France. Paracelsus had once written of the nymphs, and following him Montfaucon had shown, in all its romantic consequences, how the love of a man for a Sylph could grant even this nymph an immortal soul.<sup>58</sup> Erotic union with a creature of such fine material would necessarily far exceed love for mortal women. Jacques Martin was too serious and too much the Benedictine to grant that this aspect of belief in sylphs offered more than, as he said, *beaux sentiments*, sweet dreams. However, these reflections by the so-called Comte de Gabalis on the

56 Theocritus, *Idylls*, ed. A.F. Gow (Cambridge: 1965) XIII, v. 43–45.

57 Martin, *La religion des Gaulois* vol. 2, lib. IV, ch. 24, 153–172, and see for Martin Chorier, *Les recherches sur les antiquitez* 134–135; Fabretti Raffaello, *De aquis et aquaeductibus veteris Romae* (Rome, Johannes Baptista Bussotti: 1630) Dissertatio II, 98–109, and Menestrier Claude François, *Histoire civile ou consulaire de la ville de Lyon justifiée* (Lyon, Jean Baptiste de Ville: 1696) 130–132.

58 For a recent edition of the *Comte de Gabalis* see Montfaucon de Villars Nicolas Pierre Henri, *Le Comte de Gabalis, ou Entretiens sur les sciences secrètes*, ed. D. Kahn (Paris: 2010). The book first appeared 1670 and has been reprinted many times. It was plagiarised by Borri Francesco Giuseppe, *La Chiave del Gabinetto* (Rome, Martello: 1681).

Paracelsian intermediate beings are certainly evidence for the long life of the belief in France in forest nymphs, along with all the other variations of the mother- and nature-goddesses.<sup>59</sup> Once again, literature, folk belief and ancient artefacts had been able to confirm each other.

## V Conclusion

For Martin, but also for Keysler, Goeree and Picardt, the ancient world was not a closed era. Even if classical literature, be it Virgil or Theocritus, had spoken of nymphs or satyrs, it was not touting fictional creatures for the entertainment of the reader through the medium of poetry. Its subject was deeply real. Even if it certainly makes a difference whether one takes a nymph or fairy to be a demon, a value-neutral etheric being that even promised sexual pleasures, as with Paracelsus, or a nature goddess who had been venerated for centuries, their influence had by no means vanished at the end of the ancient world. They arose from an experience of reality that cut across eras, which had itself made the literary treatments possible and the echoes of which could be identified long before in artefacts. For Picardt it had begun in the special aura of the archaic objects kept alive by folk belief, and could still be presented as an antiquarian reading of demonology, but with Goeree and especially with Keysler and Martin it became something different. With empathy they constructed a past that was to be understood through its effects on the present. Art history, folklore and literary studies were melded into a unity that for the first time made visible the great continuity of their subjects in history of religion.

It is obvious that from a present-day perspective the filiations in cultural history drawn by Martin, the figure with the greatest background knowledge out of the scholars discussed here, are debateable in detail. Some motifs of Bachofen's *Mutterrecht* had in this way been indirectly anticipated by Martin,<sup>60</sup> though it would certainly be a mistake to draw a direct line from men like Martin or Keysler through Mannhardt's great folklore collections on the agrarian cults to volumes 7 and 8 of Frazer's *Golden Bough*.<sup>61</sup> That would

59 Martin, *La religion des Gaulois* vol. 2, l. iv, ch. 25–26, 173–199.

60 Bachofen J.J., *Das Mutterrecht. Eine Untersuchung über die Gynaiokratie der alten Welt und ihrer religiösen und rechtlichen Natur* (Stuttgart: 1861) 37–42.

61 Frazer J.G., *The Golden Bough. A Study in Magic and Religion*, 13 vols. (New York: 1951), there *The Magic Art and the Evolution of Kings*, 2 vols., 1–43, and *Spirits of the Corn and of the Wind*, 2 vols., vol. 1, 113–213. Cf. Mannhardt W., *Wald- und Feldkulte*, 2 vols. (Berlin: 1875–77) vol. 2, 3–38.

be to overstate the richness of their material and their methodical awareness, though perhaps not their enthusiasm for discovery. In their wish to give universal explanations, Keysler and Martin are, for large stretches, more reminiscent of one of the great psychedelic novels of history of religion, Robert Graves' *White Goddess* and the debates raised even now in relation to this neo-pagan manifesto. Graves would surely have liked the White Ladies.<sup>62</sup> That should not, however, prevent us from finally acknowledging that the basis for an interdisciplinary study of antiquity was laid by a group so long misread and in the twentieth century often wholly dismissed, the antiquaries of the eighteenth century.

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62 Graves R., *The White Goddess. A Historical Grammar of Poetic Myth* (London: 1948) esp. 366–375. For biographical background see Graves R.P., *Robert Graves and the White Goddess 1940–85* (London: 1995) 57–106, as a recent study e.g. Zajko V., "Scholarly Mythopoesis. Robert Graves's *The Greek Myths*", in Gibson A.G.G. (ed.), *Robert Graves and the Classical Tradition* (Oxford: 2015) 181–200, here 165–180. For a brilliant and timeless study on the role of early modern folklore in the rise of esotericism see Hutton R., *Triumph of the Moon. A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft* (Oxford: 1999) 3–210, esp. 32–51.

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